WHEN WE JOIN THE CHURCH

ARCHIE LOWELL RYAN

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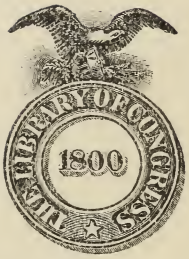

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CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

The Abingdon Religious Education Texts
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WHEN WE JOIN THE CHURCH

BY
ARCHIE LOWELL RYAN

IN COLLABORATION WITH
GEORGE HERBERT BETTS

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FOREWORD

THIS little volume is the outcome of a definitely expressed demand for such a book on the part of many ministers. It is prepared for boys and girls from twelve to eighteen years of age who are uniting with the church. It is *especially intended as a study text to be put in the hands of the young people themselves*, and to become a part of the personal library of religious books which every young Christian should be building.

The text sets forth first of all the Christian Church, its origin, growth, and achievements. Then comes the meaning of the church to its members, and the kind of loyalty they owe in return. Much is made of the church as a means through which to serve others, as well as a spiritual home in which to grow in religious experience and usefulness.

Eight out of the ten chapters have no denominational implications, but would be equally applicable to most, if not all, evangelical churches. The last two chapters deal directly with the history, organization, and achievements of the Methodist Church. The chapters are of convenient length for single lessons, and the questions for study and discussion at the end of each chapter will form convenient "teaching points" for the lesson.

In the "Supplementary Material" at the end of the volume is to be found certain material relating to the doctrines, ritual, and membership requirements of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This is to be used at the option of the minister or teacher of the class.

Grateful acknowledgments are here made to the scores of ministers who offered many helpful suggestions bearing on the plan and material for this volume.

CHAPTER I

WHAT THE CHURCH IS

So you are joining the church? Congratulations—both to you and the church! But may I ask to how many different organizations you already belong? Do you hold membership in some club, in a gang, or perhaps on an athletic team? Have you ever joined the Boy Scouts or the Camp Fire Girls, or any similar organization?

Joining the Church

You may say you do not "belong" to anything; that you have never joined any club or society. Yet it is quite certain that each of us does belong to a number of organizations. Some of these organizations we never had to join—we were always members. Others we were obliged to join in a definite, formal way (perhaps with impressive ceremonies) before we could claim membership.

Organizations we do not join.—For example, we all belong to a certain family, and bear the name of Jones, Smith, Brown, or whatever it happens to be. Yet we never "joined" this family as we would join a club or a debating society. We simply were born into the family and found our membership awaiting

us and bringing with it food, shelter, and care. Our membership was taken for granted when we arrived. This gave us the right to live in the home, enjoy its comforts, share its responsibilities, and call ourselves by the family name.

In much the same way each of us is a *citizen* of our country, of the State in which we live, and of the community, town, or city in which we have our home. There is no formal "joining" in obtaining our citizenship unless we came into this country as immigrants and had to be naturalized. Most of us were born into our citizenship as we were into our family.

It is somewhat different with the school. Though the State provides for our education, we must be enrolled formally as members of a particular school before we are entitled to its privileges. If we abuse the privileges of the school, our membership may be severed and we then no longer belong.

Joining the church an act of personal choice.— The church is one of the organizations which we must definitely join or unite with in order to have membership. You were not born into the church, but have decided to join it because you desire its help and feel an obligation to do your part in advancing its work. Deciding to unite with the church is one of the most important choices you have ever made, and taking upon you the vows of its membership is one of the most important acts of your life.

We do not think much of an American who does not have sufficient interest in the country of which he is a

citizen to study its history and government. We expect one who is joining a club or society to inform himself about its rules, its purposes, and its methods of work. So also when we are joining the church. We desire to be intelligent in our membership. We wish to know something of the church's history, its enterprises, what it seeks to do for its members and what it expects of them in return. The purpose of this book is to give you this information about the church.

What is the Church?

What is this institution you are joining—just what is the church? One will say, "It is yonder building with a high spire." Another, "It is the place where people come on Sunday to worship and listen to the sermon." Still another, "It is where we go to Sunday school."

The church more than wood and stone.—These answers are all true enough, but they do not tell the whole story. For you notice that they all speak of the place or the building. But the church is much more than this. Suppose the church building should be burned down, or destroyed by an earthquake. Is the *church* thereby destroyed?—Or does the real church still continue to exist even though the building is gone?

The church does much good in the world. Is it the building, then, that should be credited for the fine service rendered? In part, yes, for good buildings

and equipment always help. But, after all, the stone, the brick, and the wood have no life and power in themselves. It is only when the church building and equipment are wisely used that they become significant.

The real church.—A church is *a group of people who love and follow Christ and who band themselves together for worship, fellowship, and service in his name.* When Jesus said to Peter, "I will build my church," he was not speaking of the structure made of stone and mortar, but of his followers, the men and women, boys and girls who would join themselves together as a church to be workers in his cause. The most important thing about a church, therefore, is its members—whether they are true followers of Christ, trying to live as he would have them.

The church and a church.—It is also worth noticing the difference between *the* church and *a* church. In your particular town or city there may be several different churches. Perhaps the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, the Congregational Church, and the Presbyterian Church. Each of these is *a* church. Each has its own building, its membership of several scores or several hundreds as the case may be; each has its own minister, its own services, and each carries on its own individual work.

But besides the particular Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, the Congregational Church, and the Presbyterian Church in your town these denominations have churches in very many other places;

hundreds and thousands of them in the aggregate. We may therefore speak of the Methodist church, the Baptist church, the Congregational church, or the Presbyterian church meaning all of the individual churches of these denominations thought of together.

The great Christian Church.—We may even speak of *the* church in a broader sense than this; for while there are many denominations, all of them are followers of Jesus Christ and each one is working for his cause. We may therefore think of all of the different churches together as *the Christian Church*. The church in this broad sense consists of all Christians, no matter to what denomination they may belong, nor in what country they may live.

There are more than five hundred millions of Christians in the world to-day—five times as many as all the people living in the United States. What a great church is this that you are joining! And what an inspiring thought that all these millions upon millions of people of all races and nations love the Christ whom we seek to serve.

Why We Have the Church

We have the church for the same reason that we have the state, the school, or the family—because there are certain things which people can do better in groups than by working alone as individuals.

Things we do better by working together.—To illustrate, it is better for the people of a city to unite in employing a police force, than for each one

himself to undertake to protect his own life and property against lawless persons. It is easier for us to join together to support a government that will carry our mails, secure us justice, provide for our welfare and protection, and supply schools for our education than for each of us to undertake to do these things for himself. It is better for us and far more pleasant to grow up in a family group than it would be to have no home nor family where we belonged, but to be obliged to grow up independently and alone with none of the home relationships that are so dear to us.

So also when it comes to religion. In order to live the happiest and truest Christian life, we need to associate ourselves with others who are seeking to live as Christians. In order to receive the instruction we require for religious growth and development we need the preaching, the teaching, and the worship of the church. In order to do our part as Christians we must join with others in helping carry on the work which Jesus left for his followers to do—we must work through the church in deeds of kindness, mercy, and loving service.

While there may be those who live as Christians and do much good outside the church, such is the rare exception. It is as much of a mistake for one to try to be a Christian without belonging to the church as it would be for him to try to secure an education without the help of schools when schools are right at hand. The true Christian will no more try to get along without the church than a patriotic

citizen would try to live without acknowledging his allegiance to his country.

We have the church, then, because we need it for ourselves; because it enables us to work with other Christians to do good to others; and because we believe that Jesus wants his followers banded together for fellowship, for personal growth and development in religion, and for service.

Study and Discussion Topics

1. Make a list of the different organizations or social groups to which you belong without having had to join them; of those to which you belong through formally joining them.

2. How do you think uniting with the church compares in importance with joining other organizations to which many people belong.

3. Make a list of all the chief reasons or motives which decided you to join the church.

4. What reasons can you give showing why one should inform himself concerning the church when he becomes a member?

5. With what different meanings is the word "church" used? Of what does the real church consist?

6. Distinguish between *the* church and *a* church.

7. Give figures showing the size of the Christian Church in the world.

8. Explain reasons why we have the church.

9. Why do you think Christians should join the church.

10. Tell in your own words the most important thoughts you have gleaned from this lesson.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH OF THE PAST

We always like to know where things come from. So we study the history of our nation and follow its development from colonial days on to the present. We learn how our State or city was founded and what names have been connected with its growth. We trace the lineage of our family back to its founders, and tell the story of their adventures and achievements.

In the same way every loyal member of the church wants to know where the church came from. What was its origin? Where and when did it begin? Surely, a great price has been paid for the religious freedom and the privileges we enjoy to-day. Surely, the history of the church is one of thrilling adventure, great deeds, and noble achievements.

All this is true, and readers of this little book hardly can hope to find a more thrilling story than the account of the Christian Church and its conquest of the world. All we can do at present, however, is to give a brief sketch of the origin of the church and note a few of its great achievements. You must go to other books for the fuller and more interesting story.

Beginnings

Jesus was the real founder of the Christian Church; it grew immediately out of his work and bears the name of the Christ. It seems at first thought surprising, therefore, that Jesus himself did not organize a church. Nor did he give his followers instructions as to how it should be done. He expected and desired a church for his followers, but he left them to organize it.

The first Christian church.—The first group of Christians to form themselves into a church was the little company of about one hundred and twenty persons who were gathered at Jerusalem shortly after Jesus's ascension (Acts, chapter i). They met in an upper room of a house. The small congregation probably contained most of the followers left by the Master. Among them were Peter and John and James and others of the disciples. They all prayed together, and Peter preached to them and to the others assembled. On one day about three thousand were converted and joined the church.

In this way the church was started. The disciples and other followers of Jesus were on fire with love and enthusiasm. They persuaded their friends and neighbors; they taught, they preached; they prayed. Many were won to the church, not only in the region about Jerusalem but finally in pagan towns and cities as far away as Greece and Rome. From these centers the movement spread until the cause of Christ had won legions of followers.

Growth of the church.—As time went on, members flocked to the Christian Church by thousands, tens of thousands, millions! They came of different races and nations; they represented the rich and the poor, the high and the low. The church welcomed and served all classes; it adapted itself to all conditions and times, and fitted itself to the changing needs of different civilizations.

We can see now why Jesus did not need himself to establish any particular church—why it was perhaps better that he should not. His mission was more important. It was to put into men's lives a spirit of devotion and loyalty to himself and the cause for which he stood. Jesus met a few fishermen and other ordinary men and said to them, "Follow me." They obeyed, and as a result of their fellowship with the Master a new spirit entered their lives; they came to love him so completely that they were willing to serve him in any way, or even to die for him.

How Jesus prepared for the church.—It was this inner spirit of devotion which Jesus planted in the hearts of his followers that made them ready to build his church and carry on his life work. They knew that Jesus wanted them to band themselves together as a church. He had mentioned it to them. They understood that the cause for which Jesus died could not succeed unless his followers organized and went systematically at work to spread his gospel. So they began at once to establish a church and through it to spread the new gospel.

The personal loyalty and love which Jesus awoke in the hearts of his followerers was far better than any sets of commands he could have given them about founding a church. The standards of life and conduct he set before the world were worth much more than any particular kind of church organization which he might have set up. Jesus knew if the hearts and lives of his followers were right the details of church organization and government would take care of themselves.

In this way the church was left free to adapt itself to different nations and races. It could be made to serve the people of the first century or of the twentieth century. It could meet the needs of the untutored natives of Africa or the cultured peoples of civilized countries. It could change as time went on, so that in any age it might be able best to honor its Founder and serve the world for which he died.

The Testing of the Church

One of the best tests of a school, an army, or a business concern is the loyalty it inspires in those who belong to it—how much they are willing to sacrifice for their organization.

The church under persecution.—The history of the church is full of stories of high heroism. In the second and third centuries after Christ the cruel Roman emperors determined to destroy the church. They persecuted the Christians, often burning them to death or throwing them to wild beasts in the arena.

But the Christians stood firm. They were loyal to their Master and to the church. When Polycarp was brought to trial and commanded to curse the name of Jesus he answered, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he has done me nothing but good; and how can I curse him, my Lord and Saviour!" For this he was burned to death.

Even the women did not escape. Vivia Perpetua was a Christian, beautiful and well educated. She was twenty-two years of age when she was brought to trial because she worshiped Christ instead of the Roman emperor. The one in authority said, "Take a pinch of incense and throw it into the flames in honor of Cæsar, and worship him, and I will set you free." But Vivia Perpetua refused to save her life at such a price, and she was first thrown into the arena and then killed with a sword which she herself directed to her throat.

Very many such cases as these occurred during the earlier centuries. The history of the church has often been written in the blood of martyrs. The Christian Tertullian wrote to the Roman emperor: "Crucify us, rack us, crush us, stamp us under foot. The more ingenious your cruelty, the more numerous we are. The blood of Christians is the seed of the church." Surely, a church that can claim such heroism as this is worthy of our best loyalty. Surely, a Leader who can inspire such devotion should claim our fullest allegiance.

Criticizing the church.—You will find people now

and then who are indifferent to the church. You will meet others who criticize it and find fault with its methods. You may even hear thoughtless or uninformed persons say that the church has little power, influence, or usefulness.

It may be granted that the church has made mistakes, just as all other organizations make mistakes. The church is not perfect, just as the government or our school system is not perfect. The church at times, when led by men who had lost the spirit of Jesus out of their lives, even has done harm. At no time probably has the church lived up to as high a standard as it should or as its Founder would have it reach. All this is true just because the church is made up of human beings, who are themselves not perfect. The church is only as wise and as true and as helpful as are the men and women and the boys and girls who make up its membership. The church comes only as near being perfect as its members come to reaching the standard Jesus set for their lives.

The church's influence for good.—Let us admit all this. Yet it will not affect our loyalty to the church nor our devotion to the work it has to do. For God is still in his church and works through it to bless the world. With all its mistakes and imperfections the church is undoubtedly the *greatest force in human history for the upbuilding of civilization and for teaching men how to live strong, fine lives.* Take the church and its influence out of the world, and much that we prize most highly in our civilization would go

with it. Take the church and its influence out of a community or a city, and you would not care to make it your home.

Theodore Roosevelt said: "The church is a mighty force in the nation for keeping people toned up to the high levels of thinking and acting. It has been the force behind the building of homes for orphans, unfortunates, deficient, demented, aged. It has kept the affairs of the Moral Governor before the people."

Why Different Denominations?

If it may be asked why there are so many different divisions in this great army, a question might be given in reply: Why do we have so many different nations? Why are they not united under one government? The answer is obvious. Separate nations have grown up because of differences in people, customs, traditions, and ideas as to governmental procedure. At the same time most governments exist for the common purpose to promote the welfare of the people.

One single denomination not possible.—So it is with the great Christian Church. Various sects have arisen because of differences in people, customs, creeds, and ideas as to church government. No doubt the number of denominations might profitably be reduced, yet it does not follow that it would be wise to have just one large church organization. The temptations of autocracy are too great under

such conditions, nor would such a church best serve all the people who belong to it.

Growing spirit of unity.—The divisions within the Christian Church are, after all, largely external. "In the things which are essential the churches are deeply and gloriously united." They worked together practically as a unit in their service during the war. They are one in purpose to build up the Master's kingdom on earth. Year by year they are growing closer together even in external matters through the welding power of a common task. The challenge of a world with its supreme need of Christ is "closing up the ranks of God's militant hosts."

In the next chapter we shall read about some of the achievements of the church. In the meantime shall we not each loyally determine to do our best to help it fulfill its high mission in the world and so honor Him who founded it?

Study and Discussion Topics

1. What reasons can you give why we should come to know something of the past history of the church?
2. Read the story in Acts, chapter i, and tell about the first congregation of Christians after Jesus's death.
3. Tell the story of the spread of Christianity and the consequent growth of the church.
4. Why do you think Jesus himself did not establish a church?

5. What did Jesus do to prepare for the founding of his church?

6. What is one of the best tests of the loyalty we bear to any organization or cause?

7. Tell the story of some of the tests of loyalty met by the first Christians.

8. What attitude should one take about criticisms against the church?

9. Account for the various denominations of the church. What was said about the spirit of unity in the church?

10. Sum up the best points you have gathered from this chapter and the thinking you have done upon it.

CHAPTER III

GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE CHURCH

WHAT has the church accomplished? In the centuries since its origin what has it done for the world? Has it proved worthy of its great Founder? Are its achievements such that today it has a claim on our loyalty and devotion? Do we owe it our service and support?

THE CHURCH HAS DEVELOPED THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRACY

The early Christians greatly astonished the people around them by their spirit of brotherhood. Jesus had taught them that since they were all children of one Father they should look upon each other as members all of a great family. Distinctions of birth, rank, or wealth were to pass away. They were to "love one another even as I have loved you," the Master had told them. Brotherly helpfulness was to be the mark of the new society.

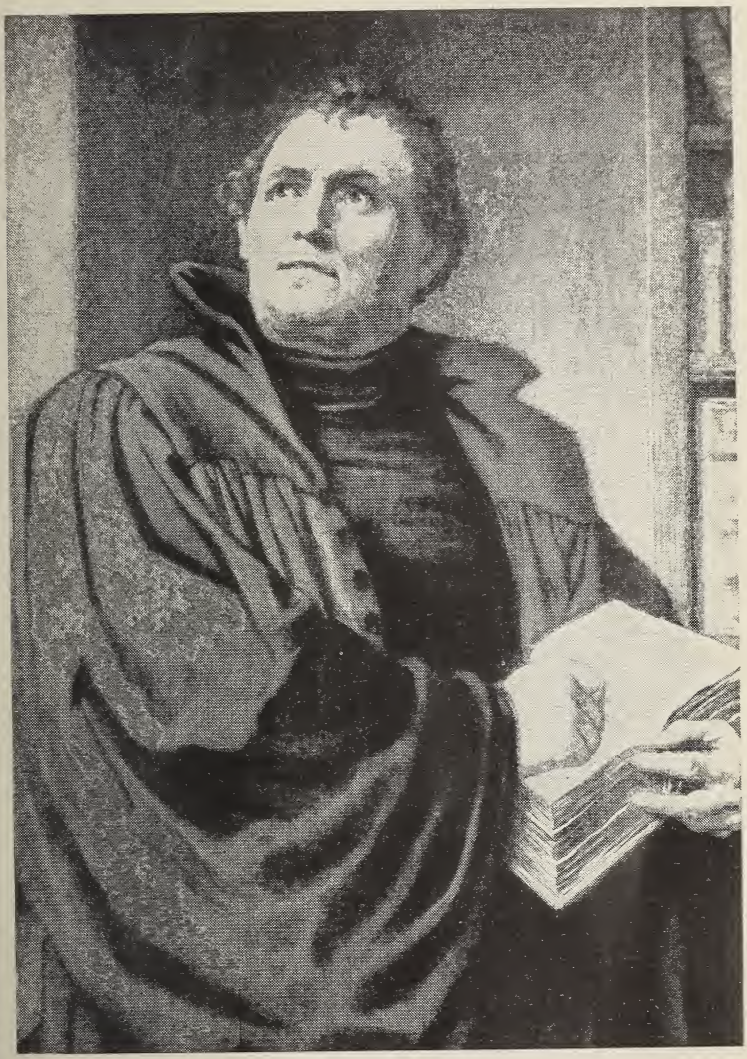
The brotherhood of the church.—This was a strange doctrine in those days of aristocratic nobles and haughty wealth on one hand and of oppressed poverty and cruel slavery on the other. But the seed of brotherhood which Jesus had planted grew,

and the church has become one of the greatest agencies for furthering the cause of democracy. It teaches that all men are created free and equal, and that God is no respecter of persons.

The democratic spirit of the church was well illustrated one day when a poor peasant was kneeling at the altar to receive the communion, and the Duke of Wellington came and knelt by his side. The peasant, embarrassed by having so famous a personage as his neighbor, started to rise. But Wellington drew him back, whispering, "We are all equals before the throne of God."

Why the church had a Reformation.—True, the church has at times in the past departed from the ideal of brotherhood and democracy given it by its Founder. During the Middle Ages selfish ambition took possession of the leaders of the church and they became very autocratic. Some of them became corrupt, and the power and influence of the church suffered a great decline.

Then came the great Reformation of the sixteenth century, led by Martin Luther as a protest against the wickedness and errors of the Roman Catholic Church. At the risk of his life Luther boldly proclaimed the equality of all men before God, and that salvation depends not on the pope or priest, as claimed by the Roman Catholic Church, but on each person's own relations with God. Luther even dared his enemies by nailing a copy of his arguments up on the door of the church at Wittenberg. When they



MARTIN LUTHER

brought him to trial he said, "Prove to me out of the Scriptures that I am wrong, and I submit."

The Reformation was the beginning of a new day, for it gave to the world the Protestant Church, one branch of which you are now joining. You and I are the heirs of many treasures of freedom which are ours because of the efforts and sacrifice of the church. Shall we not stand ready to do our part to advance still further through the work of the church the ideals of human brotherhood which Jesus committed to his followers?

The Church has Honored Woman and the Home

The best homes in the world are to be found in those lands where the Christian Church prevails. It is sad to relate that in many countries women have not had equal rights with men. They often have been looked down upon, left in ignorance and treated as slaves. The many beautiful pictures of the Madonna and her Child show the sacred place which the church gives to wifehood and motherhood. Wherever Christianity goes there wife and mother are terms of highest respect, womanhood is honored, and home is a place of love and companionship.

The church and womanhood.—What a contrast when we turn to lands where the Christian religion is unknown! Less than one per cent of the women of India can read or write. There real home life as we are accustomed to it is unknown except where Chris-

tianity has come in with its teachings; there women are degraded and looked upon as slaves. When a Christian missionary proposed to a Brahman that she would teach his wife to read, he laughed in scorn. "You can try," he said, "but women have no brains. If you succeed in teaching my wife, I will bring you my cow that you may teach her to read!" Wherever motherhood is debased, there the home is unhappy and childhood neglected and oppressed.

The church, through its schools and other forms of work, is gradually improving the condition of women in non-Christian lands. The great hope of millions of women beyond the seas lies in the ideals for the home which are found in the Christian Church. As we prize our own homes and honor and love our mothers let us do our best to bring to the homes and womanhood of less favored peoples the religion which can free them from ignorance and oppression.

The Church has Increased Human Kindness and Sympathy

Jesus spent much of his time relieving sorrow and suffering. He taught that human life is very sacred and that God cares so much for each of us that even the very hairs of our head are numbered.

The interest of Jesus in social service.— Luke gives an interesting story (4. 16–21) which reveals the attitude of Jesus toward helpfulness to others. According to his custom he went into the synagogue to worship. They gave him the book of

Isaiah and asked him to lead the service. This is what he chose to read them:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Increasing sense of the sacredness of life.—The church has caught this spirit, and through its work and influence the amount of suffering in the world has been greatly reduced. When Jesus came to earth the Roman empire was at the height of its glory and power. Yet in that day you might have traveled from the Euphrates to the Atlantic and not found a single hospital, asylum, orphanage, or other charitable institution. Now, wherever you find the Christian Church there you find organized and efficient effort to relieve pain and distress.

In the early days of Rome it was the custom for fathers to take babies which were unwelcome and throw them out on the hillside to perish or be devoured by wild beasts. There was no law to interfere.

For centuries the mothers of India had been accustomed to throw their babes to the crocodiles in the Ganges River as a sacrifice to their gods. This went on until the laws of Christian England prohibited the practice. The Christian Church cherishes childhood, and tries to bring health, happiness, and opportunity to all children everywhere,

It believes in the sacredness of life, and tries to make life as full and abundant as possible for every person.

The Church Has Promoted Morality

Jesus one time accused certain of his hearers of washing the outside of the cup while leaving it uncleansed within. He meant that they had the form or profession of good conduct, but that their thoughts and desires were impure. The church stands for inner purity, for righteousness that begins in the heart and works outward and becomes good conduct and strong character.

Standards of honor and integrity.—It is a notable fact that only in Christian nations is there a high standard of business integrity and of personal honesty. The church is constantly at war against all forms of evil and immorality. It is ever found at the van in the fight against alcohol, vice, gambling, political corruption, and all forms of oppression. Its power is always felt in every reform which seeks to make the world better and happier. Without the influence and work of the church neither life, property, nor virtue would long be safe.

True, much wrong and injustice yet prevail even in our own Christian land. The strong sometimes oppress the weak, and the greedy take what is not their own. To secure justice and fair play among men we establish government and pass laws. We inflict penalties on offenders and even send to prison

those who lift their hand in crime against their fellows.

True religion the solution.—But making laws and punishing offenders is not enough. Indeed, this does not reach the root of the trouble. Men cannot be made righteous by laws imposed from without, desirable as such laws are to protect others. The only real cure for injustice, cruelty, oppression, and crime is the spirit of the Master at work in men's hearts. Only the Christian religion will give them the attitude of generosity and kindness toward their fellows which will make them desire to help and serve rather than oppress.

The Church has been the Champion of Education

The church believes ignorance is debasing and that it is responsible for much of the world's sin. When our Pilgrim Fathers first came to this country they built schools and churches side by side so that education and worship might join hands. Our first colleges were established by the church, and even now we have in the United States many more church-founded than state-founded institutions of higher learning.

The school follows the church.—So also in foreign lands. Wherever the church has gone it has taken the school. In China the leaders declare that the educational system set up by the churches has been one of the chief factors in the awakening of the people

and in giving China a place in the family of nations. The church is to-day busy planting her schools in Africa, in India, and in the islands of the sea.

The Church Keeps Alive a Sense of God

Perhaps this is the most important work the church performs. For whatever else we need we are rich if we have God in our lives. Joshua of old said, "Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." This promise still holds good.

The supreme task of the church.—Through all the centuries the supreme task has been to keep alive in the hearts of men a sense of the nearness and reality of God. It is this that gives the church its unique place among other institutions. It is this that makes it so important that Christians join themselves to the church and give it their loyal service and devotion.

Just as the church has through the ages been helping men to find God in a more perfect way, so it will to-day help you, for God is in his church. He works through it to bless the world, and through it he allows each of us to join with him in the great task which Jesus left his church to do.

The Present Program of the Church

Probably never before since its origin has the Christian Church looked out upon so great an opportunity as that which confronts it to-day. Probably never before has the world so greatly needed its

services as it needs them now. On every continent important changes are taking place as results of the world war. A dozen thrones have toppled over and new governments are being formed. Oppressed Russia is in turmoil. China's millions are full of unrest. India is awakening to a new sense of power. The map of Europe is made over and new nations are created. Hatred and bitterness, the after-effects of strife, have left their poisons in many lands.

The church facing forward.—The church is not asleep to these conditions. It is aware of its responsibilities. It is aroused to meet the challenge of the times. The various denominations are uniting in a world-movement for education and evangelization. They are making provision for every form of Christian work, both at home and in foreign lands. They are asking and receiving funds by hundreds of millions. They are calling forth and training thousands of workers for the one common and supreme task of upbuilding Christ's kingdom upon earth.

The years that lie just ahead will witness great events and see great victories for righteousness and justice. The church—*your* church—will have an important share in this program. Do you not glory in the privilege of doing your part in the great work?

Study and Discussion Topics

1. It is said that the church has developed the spirit of democracy. What do you understand by "the spirit of democracy"?

2. What is the church's ideal of brotherhood? What did Jesus teach about this?

3. What was the origin of the Protestant Church?

4. Tell of the difference in the attitude toward womanhood in Christian and non-Christian countries.

5. Give several examples from the life of Jesus showing that he taught lessons of kindness and sympathy.

6. What has been the influence of the church in teaching the sacredness of human life?

7. Contrast the standards of morality in Christian and non-Christian lands.

8. What has been the church's influence on education?

9. What is set forth as the supreme task of the church?

10. Tell of the task that lies ahead of the church.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHURCH'S STANDARD OF MEMBERSHIP

The Christian Church is, of course, made up of Christians, just as America is made up of Americans. That is well understood. But it is well known too that not all who call themselves Americans are equally good Americans, and some who claim to be Americans are not worthy of the name. It is equally true that not all members of the church are equally good Christians, and possibly some who are in the church have no right to call themselves Christians. *Just what does it mean to be a Christian?*

Things That Do Not Prove One a Christian

There are a number of things which, while they are commonly practiced by Christians and are highly desirable in themselves, yet do not really guarantee that one is a Christian. Some of these things are:

Membership in the church.—All Christians should belong to the church; most Christians do. Yet it does not make one a Christian to join the church. You join the church *because* you are already a Christian. It is true that the church will help you to be a

better Christian, but it also happens every now and then that some one who has his name on the church roll does very wicked things and shows that he is no Christian at all. The point we want to get at is that *church membership in itself does not prove one to be a Christian.*

Attending church services.—Surely, one would not be called a good Christian and a loyal member if he failed to attend the public services of the church and do his part to make them a success. Yet it is possible to attend church regularly, pay toward its support, and take part in its exercises without being truly a Christian. Some do this very thing. Church attendance, even regular church attendance, does not really *prove* that you are a Christian.

Repeating the creed.—The word "creed" comes from the Latin word *credo*, which means "I believe." It is right that we should have a creed. What we really and truly believe about God, about Christ, and about religion has much to do with our lives. Yet the mere *saying* of a creed has little value. It is possible to repeat with our lips, thoughtlessly, or without understanding, a very beautiful creed—and still not be much of a Christian. Undoubtedly there are many persons who join in repeating the creed of their church without its truths really taking hold upon their lives.

Reading the Bible.—No one who honestly sets out to be a Christian will fail to read his Bible and master its great truths. Yet reading the Bible does not in

itself prove us Christians. For many people read the Bible without entering into its deeper meanings and without applying its lessons to their lives.

Let us again repeat that all these things are necessary and good. Christians will join the church; they will attend its services; they will repeat the creed; they will read their Bibles. But, after all, these are the external things. They *can* all be done and one still not be a Christian. What, then, is it to be a Christian? *What is the real test?*

What it Is to Be a Christian

When Jesus lived upon earth he approached men whom he wished as his disciples and said to them, "Follow me." Again he said, "Come ye after me." Those who obeyed were his followers; they became Christians.

The test of a Christian.—The call comes as truly to-day as in olden times. The spirit of the living Christ says, "Follow me." If we are willing to obey, we "accept Christ." This means certainly that we *accept his way of living*, and earnestly try to pattern our lives after his example, day by day, all the days of the week while we work, when we play, while we are alone, or when we are with others.

To be a Christian is to *live as Jesus lived.* It is each day to make our lives as nearly as we can like his life. When Christ said "I am the way," he meant that the way he lived must be our way of living if we would be true followers.

The life must be right.—This means that we must keep ourselves pure, and *free from sin*; we are to remember that Jesus was tempted in all points as we are tempted, and yet without sin.

We must be of *forgiving spirit*, generous to others, not cherishing bitterness, hatred, or revenge against those who have wronged us. Almost with his last breath on the cross Jesus prayed his Father to forgive those who had crucified him.

Our *joyousness*, cheerfulness, and fullness of life must make others see the attractiveness of our religion. The word "joy" was almost constantly on Jesus's lips whenever he was speaking of his religion. He came that our "joy might be full."

We must be *loyal* to his cause, even when it requires sacrifice or hardship on our part. Jesus was loyal even unto death, the death of the cross.

We must be *obedient* to his commands. Perhaps you remember some time in your own experience when you disobeyed your father and did wrong. Then came a sense of guilt and estrangement. You felt that a barrier had arisen between you and your father. You knew that he did not cherish anger or resentment against you, but you also felt that things could not be the same again between you until you had gone to him and made it right. We cannot disobey Jesus's rules of conduct and still be his followers and friends.

We must be *courageous* to do our part in righting wrong or evil. Jesus was not a pacifist when wrongs

needed righting or when justice required defense. He spoke out sharply when occasion demanded, and once even cleared the temple of money-changers by the use of force.

We must be *sincere* and free from hypocrisy. Even the worst enemies of Jesus never doubted that he was true to his convictions. There was no pretense. Every word he spoke and every act he performed meant just what they seemed to mean.

We must have *self-control*. No other virtue in Jesus's character stands out more clearly than this. Many of the recorded incidents of his life reveal his remarkable poise and command over himself.

Our lives must be full of *love and helpfulness* for others—kind words, generous deeds, unselfish service. Jesus went about doing good. He never passed those by who needed help. He brought joy and happiness wherever he went. One day a Boston newspaper printed this item about the great preacher, Phillips Brooks: "The day was dark and gloomy, but Phillips Brooks walked down through Newspaper Row and all was bright." This was being a true follower of Him who came to bring joy and gladness to the world.

The true measure of a Christian, then, is how one thinks, and feels, and lives day by day. If one is in all the common duties and relationships faithfully following the example which Jesus set in his manner of living, he can truly say that he is a Christian. Then as a matter of course, it will follow naturally

that he will want to join the church, attend its services, study the Bible, and do many other things which will help him to be a better Christian.

How We Become Christians

Some do not know when or how they become Christians. From their earliest recollections they have known about God, admired and loved Jesus, and tried to be and to do as he would have them. Other persons can fix a definite time and place when they first felt that they definitely had the right to call themselves Christians. Perhaps they signed a card, or came forward in a church and knelt at the altar, or gave some other sign of their desire to be a Christian.

It does not particularly matter about the *method* by which we became a Christian—whether it is a process of slow growth from early childhood, or an act of sudden resolve and decision. The thing that really matters is this: *that we definitely and with full purpose desire to be a worthy follower of Jesus, and are willing to live as he would have us live and do as he would have us do.*

If we have been brought up as Christians from early childhood, then, when we have grown older and are able to make our own decisions we will consciously and with definiteness of purpose accept Jesus as our Saviour, guide and model and ask him to receive us as one of his followers.

If, on the other hand, we have not been brought up as Christians, but have decided to become Christians,

the process is the same. We must in either case definitely and with full purpose choose to become followers of Jesus and to make his way of life our way. Only in this way can we be true Christians.

Study and Discussion Topics

1. Is it true that there can be good and poor Christians, just as good and bad Americans? How is one to judge between the two classes in each case?

2. Discuss each of the several things which do not prove one a Christian.

3. What is meant by saying that these are the *external* things?

4. Make a list of the tests given for a Christian. Would you add still other tests?

5. Which of these tests do you think are the more important, or are they of equal importance?

6. Which is the hardest test for you to apply?

7. Some persons grow up from earliest childhood as Christians, and others are "converted" when they are older. What was your own experience, that of gradual growth, or a sudden decision?

8. Which is the more important question, *how* has one become a Christian? or, What *kind* of Christian has he become?

9. Quote from the last section of the chapter, "the thing that really matters." Can you fully make this decision your own?

10. Summarize the best points you have gleaned from the chapter.

CHAPTER V

PROBLEMS OF THE NEW MEMBER

A BASEBALL game was in full swing. At the close of the fifth inning the score was 2 to 0 in favor of the home team, who were confident of victory. But in the first half of the sixth, the visitors made a rally, bunched their hits and ran in four scores. The effect was disastrous to the home team. They lost their nerve, errors were made, and enthusiasm was gone. The players seemed to lack ability to fight under difficulties, and the game ended 9 to 2 in favor of the visiting side. *The home team had shown themselves "quitters."*

It is possible to play the "quitter" in many other things than baseball. Whenever one gives way, becomes discouraged, and loses the spirit of resistance in the face of difficulties, he has become a "quitter." Perhaps nowhere is the temptation greater to join the "quitters" than in the struggle to keep ourselves from evil and to live up to our ideals. Many young Christians find that as long as everything goes well they are full of hope and enthusiasm; they enjoy their religion and are loyal to it. But when some trouble or doubt arises, or when in an unguarded moment they suffer defeat under the pressure of

temptation, they lose their grip and become discouraged. Before they know it they have joined the ranks of the "quitters."

Problems Sure to Come

Everyone has his problems. The young person who thinks that once he has decided to be a Christian and has joined the church, then all difficulties and problems will be removed from his way is much mistaken. Paul, in describing his own life as a Christian, tells how he had "fought the good fight." Even Jesus himself was not free from the problems all must meet, for we read that after his baptism he underwent a series of temptations. And again, that "he was tempted in all points like as we are."

Indeed, it is likely that as we join the church our problems will, at least for a time, multiply; for many questions will arise which must be decided, and problems will come up which must be settled. The important thing is that we shall not in our new relations be "quitters," but shall "quit ourselves like men."

Personal temptations.—We shall be tempted—there is no doubt about that. The harm comes not in being tempted but in yielding to temptation. True we may often avoid temptation, and by setting up right habits of resistance and self-control secure increasing power over most temptations. We can learn to turn to God for help when temptation arises and so add this source of strength to our own.

But in spite of all we can do, it is likely that we shall sometimes yield and do wrong. What then? Shall we be "quitters" and say as some do, "I would like to be a Christian if only I could live up to it"? Or shall we do as the prodigal did, repent in sorrow for our sin and, conscious of our Father's love, return to him and ask him for forgiveness?

Jesus's teaching on this point is clear. Even though we sin and prove ourselves unworthy, God still loves us and wants us to come back. Even though the wrong we have done cannot be wiped out nor the stains upon our own lives wholly erased, the Father is willing to give us another chance, and his help is always ours when we ask for it aright. Our part, once we are conscious of having sinned, is to turn from the wrong way in sorrow and regret, seeking forgiveness and making amends where we can. Having done this, we may again take courage and, forgetting our mistake, make a fresh start.

Problems of feeling.—There are those who think that to be a Christian one must have a certain kind of feeling or emotional experience. It is true that religion often brings to us the finest, deepest, and most precious experiences of feeling. Yet people differ in the matter of feeling just as they differ in their type of thought or in their tastes. We cannot all be alike, and must therefore make allowance for these differences.

Furthermore, religion is not fundamentally a matter of feeling, but of *right living*. Jesus never made

feeling one of the conditions of becoming his follower, nor did he promise his followers that they would have any particular kind of feeling experience. He said, rather, "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The best way to do is to let feeling take care of itself, for we can never get a desired feeling by directly seeking it. If we see a house on fire, we do not stop to analyze our feelings before we decide what to do. We give the alarm, we rush in and help with the rescue of any who are in danger—we do our duty as we see it. It is likely that in doing this we *shall* have a feeling of exultation and satisfaction because we are able to help, and later we may be happy over the service we rendered or the appreciation that came to us because of what we did. But this consideration was not the reason for our action. We saw a thing that needed doing and we did it, *and the feeling came.* So in the matter of living a Christian life: if we live rightly, act rightly—if we follow the Way—the feeling will come without our seeking it or troubling over it. God will be a very real Presence in our hearts, and our "joy will be full."

The problem of associations.—It occasionally happens that a young person joins the church from a social group who are not interested in religious matters. Then what shall he do? Shall he break old ties, dropping the associations of his former friends, or shall he keep on with the group as before? On the one hand there is danger to his own religious development if he is in intimate contact with those who are

indifferent or hostile to the church and religion. On the other hand, he will probably be called a prig and will surely lose all chance to win his comrades if he breaks with them. What ought one to do in such a case?

Here, as in so many other things the practice followed by Jesus himself will help us. He recognized the need of an inner circle of close friends who felt as he felt about the things that lay closest to his heart. Those with whom he was most intimate were in full accord with him. At the same time he mingled freely with the multitude and was popular with all classes of people.

Does not this contain a suggestion for us? Having taken upon us the vows of Christians and of the church, shall we not naturally expect to form our most intimate and helpful associations among those who have like interests and ideals with ourselves? But shall we not at the same time maintain friendly and cordial relations with all those with whom we ought in any case to associate? We will make very sure, however, that in our associations with those who are not interested in religion we are exerting upon them a helpful influence rather than allowing them to draw us away from loyalty to Christ and the church. If we cannot accomplish this result, we should break off the associations.

The problem of amusements.—The amusement question has been a stumbling-block to many. Some have felt that if they became Christians and joined

the church they must then refrain from doing many things which otherwise would possess no harm.

Now, it is true that the very fact that one has taken upon him the name of "Christian" and of a church carries with it a responsibility which cannot be escaped. One may have to refrain from doing certain things which otherwise he would not be especially criticized for doing. On the other hand, let us remember this: *The church asks us to refrain from nothing that is not harmful, at least under some conditions, whether we belong to the church or not.*

While Jesus said something about self-denial, he placed chief emphasis, not on denial, but on the positive side. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." He knew that when men loved him and centered their life purpose on living as he lived there would be little doubt that particular problems would decide themselves.

The restraint on amusements does not mean that the play side of our nature is to be shut out. Fun, play, recreation, and amusement are all necessary and worth while. The young church member needs to drop none of these which are good and wholesome. Let him be guided by the experience of older Christians, and let him ask himself when a problem arises concerning any particular amusement what judgment he thinks the Master would render upon it. This is the way a distinguished teacher answered one of his students who asked him about amusements: "Here is an imaginary line. On one side are possible dangers,

as shown by the experience of many people. On the other side there is plenty of room, and an abundance of fun and amusement left. Why run any risk? Give yourself a reasonable margin of safety by keeping on the right side of the line."

Problems of Sabbath observance.—What shall one do on Sunday? It must be assumed, of course, that the church member will attend the services of his church. But when this is done, what then? May one then seek recreation and change?

In this case, as in the matter of amusements, we must deal with principles rather than specific directions, leaving each to apply these principles to his own particular case. Jesus taught us that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Again, that "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day." Such principles and the experience of Christian people would seem to justify the following rules for the use of Sunday:

1. Make it a day of *spiritual culture* through worship, fellowship, and instruction in the church.

2. Make the Sabbath a day of healthful *rest and change*, different from other days. Seek God through the beautiful in nature and art.

3. Sunday should be a day of *joy in the home.* Home games, good reading, stories, conversation, singing, walking, or riding together—all these things are right and good if carried out in a proper spirit.

4. All *unnecessary labor should be laid aside* on

Sunday. Nor should we unnecessarily cause others to work for us.

5. Make Sunday a day for *cultivating friendships* of the highest and best type.

6. Sunday should be made a day of *good deeds* and special helpfulness to others, remembering the sick and needy.

7. *No act of ours on the Sabbath should tempt others* to lose respect for the day or fail properly to observe it; for we are our brother's keeper.

Taking part in religious meetings.—Many young people are backward about speaking or leading in religious meetings in their church. Sometimes they feel that others can do better than they or that they have little to say which would interest or help other people. Again the hesitancy may be on account of sheer bashfulness or diffidence when in a church, although on the playground or out among their fellows they may be able to take leadership.

While there are many persons of true religious experience who speak little of their religion, it is, nevertheless, desirable for one to train himself to participate in the public meetings of the church. When opportunity offers, the young church member should, therefore, have the courage to take his part, doing the best he can. In a short time the feeling of awkwardness will pass away and real enjoyment may come from social participation in religious meetings.

It is, however, to be remembered that there are those who are naturally backward about speaking or

taking leadership in social groups, not only in the church, but in other places as well. Such persons may find it a positive hardship publicly to read a verse of Scripture, give a testimony, or offer a prayer. The reality of their religion is not to be doubted on this account. There are many quiet and unheralded forms of service in which they may take part with real satisfaction. The essential thing is that they shall all have such a sense of duty and such devotion to the church that they shall earnestly and sincerely desire to fill their place in whatever line opportunity for service may offer.

Problems of conscience.—Conscience is that in us which urges us to do what we believe to be right and which condemns us if we do what we believe to be wrong. Conscience is a safe guide, providing it is a trained and intelligent conscience. The Hindu mother may follow her conscience when she drowns her babe in the Ganges River as a sacrifice to her gods. In this case, conscience is not a safe guide because it is an ignorant and unenlightened conscience. The young Christian should diligently study the life and teachings of Jesus in order to train his conscience to the Christ standard of living.

A strange thing about conscience is that while it may trouble us greatly when we first begin to go counter to its commands, it troubles us less and less if we continue to neglect its earlier warnings. If we keep on violating our conscience it gradually becomes so hardened that it is not disturbed no matter how

much we abuse it. The great thing, therefore, is to keep our conscience keen and clear by following its directions, not allowing its edge to be dulled by any evasions or contradictions.

Study and Discussion Topics

1. What is your definition of a "quitter"? Give an illustration.
2. How may one become a "quitter" about his religion?
3. Shall a Christian expect that he will be free from temptation? Why?
4. What is to be done if we have yielded to temptation and sinned?
5. What problem do young Christians sometimes have about *feeling*? Is it to be expected that all will have the same feeling experience? What is the best plan to follow?
6. What rule should one follow about his associations?
7. What rule should we follow about amusements?
8. Give summary of the rules stated for Sabbath observance, and tell whether you think they cover the case.
9. What should govern one's practice about taking part in religious meetings?
10. Summarize what you feel to be the most important points you have learned from this chapter.

CHAPTER VI

HOW THE CHURCH SERVES ITS MEMBERS

THE church stands for helpfulness and service. That is its business in the world—the reason for its existence. The service rendered by the church extends in two directions: it serves its *members*, and it serves the broader *world outside* of its own people. We already have spoken of the service of the church to society; the purpose of this chapter is to show some of the ways in which the church serves its own members.

THE CHURCH PROVIDES A SPIRITUAL HOME

We all like to *belong* somewhere. We feel the need of having a place we can call our own, whether it be country, home, or church. To be cut off, for example, from one's native land, like "the man without a country," sentenced never to return, would be one of the worst of tragedies. To feel that our home ties have been broken, and that those who loved us no longer expect or care to see us—such a fate is almost unthinkable.

A place where we belong.—In a similar way, to be without a church is to miss some of the best things

of life. We need the church because it provides us a spiritual home, a place we can call our own, where we can have the benefits of helpful associations and opportunities for Christian instruction, worship, and service.

The Church Provides Instruction

Just as we need the instruction of the public school for life and its tasks, so we also need the instruction provided by the church in order that we may live our lives in the happiest and most satisfactory way. We need to know about God, his love, plans, and desires for us. We need to understand that he is ever near us as our friendly protector and helper. We need to be informed about the great truths of religion, and the part religion is to have in our daily lives, and in the world to which we belong. We need to study the life and personality of Jesus, that we may appreciate him as our Saviour and Master. All this and much more the church provides for us. Such knowledge will help us to meet our personal problems, to grow as Christians, and to be intelligent in the service we render others.

Through preaching.—Most of us come into the church without a very full knowledge of the Bible and religion. We need more information; we need to have our views broadened and our convictions strengthened; we need to learn constantly how to apply religion in a practical way to our daily lives.

Preaching will help us in all these things; that is

what it is for, and to that end the preacher plans and preaches his sermons. In the first days of the church, "they that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word." These first preachers proclaimed a message of inspiration and good news which lifted men to higher ideals and a stronger courage. From that time to the present the church has, through its preaching, broadened and enriched the lives of those who would hear and heed its message. From week to week and from month to month the preacher unfolds to us the truths hidden in the great themes from the Bible and from life, and shows us how to use them in our own living.

Through the church school.—Feeling that we have need of more instruction than can be given through the pulpit, the church has provided for us a school. Usually this is on Sunday, though more recently week-day and vacation schools of religion have been organized in many places.

We should find a place in one of these schools, and truly study the courses there provided. There are in the church schools of the United States almost twenty million pupils pursuing lessons dealing with the Bible and the problems of Christian living. One is never too old nor too young to belong to this church school group since we are never too old nor too young to learn about the truths of religion.

The Church Provides for Worship

In a heathen temple in China an old woman was

devoutly prostrating herself repeatedly before a hideous idol. This was for her worship, the best she knew. We have learned to worship in the noble Christian way because the church has made such splendid provision for this part of our development.

What worship does for us.—As we draw close to God through either private or public worship, it brings us an *inner satisfaction and peace.* We feel that his love reaches down to us, and that his strength is added to ours, helping us to live and grow in his likeness. Worship *brings comfort* to us when we are in distress or trouble; there is much suffering and sorrow in the world, and this is one of our greatest needs. Jesus said to his disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled." Many times persons who go to church cast down, discouraged, and sorrowful come away with a new grip on life through the inspiration of the hour of worship.

Worship also cultivates a sense of God's nearness. Is there any greater need than that of having a feeling of the reality of God's presence? A British soldier was about to go over the top. He was facing the grim realities of life, death, and eternity. Turning to a friend who was trying to cheer him, he said, "It's all right to entertain me, but I want some one to tell me how to live and die; I want to know about God." True worship gives us the sense of God's nearness, and a feeling that he can and does help us. Our worship may be in the form of a hymn appreciatively sung; it may be by a prayer reaching out in earnest

faith after God, or by the heart-searching message of a sermon. There is no greater service the church can render its members than that of bringing them closer to the heart of the Father through worship.

The Church Administers the Sacraments

The church serves its members through the administration of two special church ceremonies, called the sacraments of *Baptism* and *the Lord's Supper*. Both of these ceremonies were given by Jesus, and have been faithfully practiced by the Christian Church through all the centuries since. When properly administered they are very solemn and impressive. Their purpose is to help make more real to us certain essentials of Christian truth. Let us see just how this is done.

Baptism.—There is an interesting story in the Bible about a rich Ethiopian (Acts 8. 25–39). As he was riding along in his chariot, Philip, one of the Lord's disciples, met him and talked with him about becoming a follower of Christ. The Ethiopian accepted the teaching, and as a sign or token of his new relationship, received the rite of baptism.

In a similar way to-day baptism serves as a part of the initiation ceremony when one joins the church. Whether we were baptized in infancy or after we became older, the rite signifies that we belong to the Father's household. A small child, of course, does not understand the sacrament, but many churches baptize young children because they believe the child

is entitled to it as an outward sign of his rightful place in the Kingdom. Concerning little children, Jesus said, "Of such is the kingdom." Probably the chief significance of infant baptism is for the parents. As they consecrate the child to God, they pledge themselves so to teach and train him that he may grow up in fellowship with the church. Then when he is old enough consciously to take upon himself the vows of church membership, he ratifies and accepts what has gone before.

Baptism, then, whether for the child or for the adult, means to receive the badge of membership in Christ's church, just as a page in the olden days received the Order of Knighthood through the authority of the king. The value of the baptism ceremony is not in the form, nor in the water, but in having the right attitude of mind and heart as the sacrament is received. On our part, baptism is primarily a declaration of loyalty to Christ and his principles of living.

The Lord's Supper.—The Lord's Supper, or communion service, as it is often called, is the most sacred ordinance of the church. It was instituted by Jesus and has been observed by the church ever since as a memorial of his suffering and death.

On the same night that he was betrayed, the night before his crucifixion, Jesus met with his disciples in an upper room to celebrate the Jewish feast of the passover (Luke 22. 7-22). But this old Jewish supper was thenceforth to have a new significance.

Jesus knew what the morrow had in store. He was anxious to make this last night with the disciples so full of meaning that it never would be erased from their memories. This he desired, not selfishly to exalt himself, but to stimulate in his disciples undying loyalty to the cause for which he was to suffer and die.

So when he took the bread he gave thanks, broke it, and passed it to his disciples, saying, "*Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.*" Then he took the cup, and after giving thanks he also passed it to them, saying, "*Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; do this as oft as ye shall drink it in remembrance of me.*"

Meaning of the bread and wine.—The white bread and the sweet wine are the symbols which represent his broken body and shed blood. Just as there is no value in the water in the baptismal service, so in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, there is no virtue in the bread and wine themselves. But, if we partake of these elements in a spirit of reverence, humility, and love, our act becomes a reconsecration to Christ and his service as we prayerfully meditate upon his sacrifice for us.

The Lord's Supper is not only a memorial, but it is also a real *communion, or fellowship*. While baptism is the rite of initiation into Christian relationship, the Lord's Supper signifies the continuance of that

relationship. It helps to make Christ seem nearer and more real, thus bringing to us comfort, strength, and inspiration. Added to this, the communion binds us together with all of Christ's disciples into a common Christian brotherhood.

The Church Provides for Social Fellowship

We all need friends and associates. It is not natural to live by ourselves like a hermit. The largest joy and satisfaction are found only by living among others with whom we can share common interests and ideals. The church serves us by providing for this social fellowship. In the Sunday school, the young people's meetings, the church service, the prayer meeting, and the many church social gatherings we are brought into contact with the best of Christian people.

The value of inspiring associations.—Our church membership will have the largest value for us when we make the most of these opportunities. We should make a special effort to be sociable, and give as much as we receive. We should find our most intimate associations within the ranks of the church. By so doing we will bring to bear upon our lives influences that will help us much in living up to the Christian standards. For example, when temptations come, the fact that our friends expect us to be loyal to the church and its teachings will be a strong factor in keeping us true. The church, then, stimulates us to

right living by surrounding us with people who expect and help us to live up to the best.

The Church Provides for Organized Cooperative Service

The final value of the church is to be measured by the service it renders through its members. The soldier may have been well trained, but unless he serves he is of no value as a soldier. The doctor who does not use his knowledge to alleviate human suffering is rated zero in his worth as a doctor. So the church not only provides instruction, training, worship, and inspiration, but it also organizes and directs a variety of activities, Members are not only exhorted to go about like the Master doing good, but the church makes plans so that their service may be most effective through cooperative effort.

Ways opened for service.—For example, there are the Boy Scouts and the Camp Fire Girls' movements. Under the auspices of the church they have often proved helpful agencies through which the church can work. The young people's societies and the organized Sunday school classes, reaching out in helpfulness to the community and finding new life for themselves through service rendered to others, afford opportunities for us to repay something of the debt we owe the world. The women's missionary societies, the men's brotherhoods, besides various other organizations are fine avenues of service. These all have definite programs of cooperative service, and are

achieving success in bringing the Christ spirit closer to the lives of people.

As you join the church, therefore, seek your place in the ranks of service. Your goal as a Christian is not simply to *be good*, but to *do good*, remembering the Master's injunction, "The greatest of all is the servant of all."

Study and Discussion Topics

1. Compare our need for a church home with our need for a family home.
2. Explain the different ways in which the church provides us with instruction in religion.
3. Try writing down for several Sundays the principal things you learn from the sermon. Perhaps this plan would be worth following permanently.
4. Compare the amount of time and study you give the Bible and religion in the church school with the time given arithmetic or language in the public school. Do you think we give the subject of religion fair treatment?
5. Just what does "worship" mean? In what different ways may we worship God? What does worship do for us?
6. What is a *sacrament?* What are the different sacraments of the Christian Church? Why do we have sacraments?
7. Explain what is meant by the sacrament of baptism? Find and read the account of Jesus's baptism. When were you baptized?

8. Read the account of the first Lord's Supper. Why do we now have this sacrament?

9. Give several examples of opportunities for cooperative service afforded by the church.

10. Make a summary of the principal ways in which the church serves its members.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT THE CHURCH EXPECTS OF ITS MEMBERS

Just as parents are happy to give good things to their children, so the church is glad to serve its members. But receiving from any source puts us under obligations to give something in return. To repay our parents for what they do for us, we are expected to give our love and obedience, help in the home, and show loyalty to the family interests and welfare. What does the church desire and expect from us in return for all that it gives in the way of service and helpfulness?

The principle illustrated.—A certain Boy Scout had one day done a good turn by helping an aged man across a crowded street in a city. The man thanked him very warmly, but the boy replied: "It is nothing. Scouts are expected to do this sort of thing." Another Boy Scout, when he was offered pay for doing his good turn, refused, saying, "Boy Scouts do not do that."

The same principle applies to the members of the church. There are certain things that we do and certain things that we refrain from doing because the church expects it of its members; and, just as

boys are glad and proud to do what the Boy Scout organization expects of them, so we should be glad and proud to do what the church expects of us as members.

The Right Kind of a Life

The church expects that its members will live the right kind of life. We are not for a moment to forget that we are Christians, and bear the name of the Christ. Nor are we to forget that the honor of the church is in part in our keeping. Tennyson has his Galahad to say, "My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure." The church, of all institutions, expects its members to be pure in heart, and to maintain the highest standards of character and conduct.

Not profession alone, but practice.—Jesus told the Pharisees, "Ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness" (Matt. 23. 27). Men constantly judge the church by what they see in its members. Just as counterfeit money would injure the credit of a nation or a bank, so a church member who does not ring true is a detriment to the church's standing and welfare.

The church, therefore, has a right to expect of its members that they will make their religion count every day in the week, and not just be a matter for Sunday and church times. It happened very recently that a certain minister preached a strong sermon on

"Righteousness in Everyday Living." One of the members of his church, who was pious enough on Sunday but not very careful about his week-day life, became indignant. He said, "Things have come to a pretty pass when religion is applied to a man's private life." But that is exactly what religion is for. It is not a cloak to be worn on Sunday. Our religion enters into all we think, and say, and do, under all circumstances and at all times and in all places. Only when we take religion into our lives in this practical way can it be real and satisfying, and only thus can we do our duty as members of the church.

A Spirit of Cooperation

No business or other organization can be run successfully without team work among those responsible for it. There must be a spirit of cooperation in the home, the school, the athletic team, or any other group which would be successful in its enterprises. The church expects its members to look upon the church as *their* church—to be interested in its welfare, to be loyal to its enterprises, and in every possible way to promote its interests. This does not mean that we should be narrowly denominational, nor that we should fail to see the good in other churches. Just as one would not think much of a student who was not loyal to his class, or of a member of a football squad who was not loyal to his team, so we expect the same kind of loyalty and support from members to their churches.

Refrain from fault-finding.—This spirit of cooperation will keep us from all unnecessary criticism and fault-finding. When things go wrong or fail to suit us, we will remember that not everyone can have his way, but that working together always means adjustment and giving in to the interests of the larger number. Therefore, whether we can always have our way or not, we will in every case be "boosters," and not "knockers," in the work of the church.

Loyal attendance.—We will support the church and show our spirit of cooperation by our attendance upon its exercises. No organization can run unless those who belong to it come to its meetings and do their part. If the church is to have preaching, then it must have listeners. A good sermon is as much dependent upon the readiness of a congregation to receive it as upon the ability of the minister to deliver it. The loyal church member will, therefore, plan to give a reasonable portion of his Sunday, and of his week days when necessary, to the meetings of the church. Nor should he look upon this in the light of a sacrifice, but remember at all times that if he goes in the right spirit, he is receiving much more than he is giving.

The loyalty of prayer.—Tennyson said, "More things are wrought by prayer than the world dreams of." The church believes in prayer. It urges its members to seek this great source of help and inspiration, not only for their own lives, but for the life of the church they have chosen. The welfare of the

church should, therefore, be an object of definite prayer on the part of all its members. Christ's kingdom cannot advance without the prayers of Christian people.

Active Participation in Church Activities

The church is a working institution. It carries on a wide range of activities which require the participation of many people. Almost all of them give their time, and quite freely, without monetary compensation. The church is, therefore, dependent upon the good will and loyalty of its membership for the carrying on of its program. One must not expect continuously to drink in without giving something in return.

Doing our part.—We should remember that in the church exercises there is singing to be done, responses in which we can join, and various other activities which need our support and participation. When we attend the church school we should recognize that only those who have given time and thought to the preparation of the lesson can make any real contribution to the class. If we have grown older, and are sufficiently prepared to take our place as teachers in the church school, we should not hesitate to give the time and effort necessary. There are almost two million Sunday school teachers and officers in the United States who are gladly and freely giving their time and service to this work. Recruits nat-

urally must come from the younger members in order to make good the losses from this great army.

Many fields of service.—There are many avenues of service awaiting us. No one need stand idly by waiting for a chance to serve. Besides teaching in the Sunday school there are social meetings requiring leaders, and various lines of work demanding committees. There is the missionary project with its enlarging program of world service. There is the task of evangelism—winning and leading men to Christ. In short, there is work for every person in the church who will freely give up his time and thought in order to make the church program a success. As we behold the need and opportunity for workers, may the challenge make us loyally respond like Isaiah of old: "Here am I; send me."

Financial Support

Every working organization requires financial support from some source. Sometimes, as in the case of the school, this support may come from the state through public taxation. In the case of the church, however, the support is altogether through voluntary contributions from its members.

We must pay our share.—Now, it costs money to run a church. Not only is the building itself to be supplied, and the necessary equipment, but there are the minister's salary, church school supplies, and many other expenses which must constantly be provided for. Besides support for its local needs,

every church also expends money for its outside enterprises, such as home and foreign missions, education, special gifts, and benevolences, and many other things.

Some one must pay all these bills of the church. This means they must be paid by the members, and each one should do his part. Even the young member should regularly pay toward the expenses of the church. Furthermore, he should, if possible, pay from money earned by himself, and not from that given him for this purpose by his parents.

A method of giving.—As to the method of giving, the *tithe* is commendable. This method was followed by the Jews as an expression of their loyalty to God's work. The plan was recognized and honored by Jesus when he said, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. 23. 23). In our giving we need to recognize that all we have belongs to God. He is the owner and we are his stewards. Some people are able to give more than a tenth. But whether our income be large or small, we are expected to be faithful as Christian stewards according as God has prospered us, remembering that "God loveth a cheerful giver."

Growth

Just as we grow in body and mind, so also the church expects us to grow in Christian character and efficiency of service. As small children we understood very little about the meaning of family life, but

through continued experience and training in the home we came to understand more about its beautiful relationships, and about our duties and privileges as members of the home. In the same way we are to grow and develop into helpful Christians and church members.

Means of growth in the church.—Through the instruction, worship, and fellowship within the church we shall grow in our knowledge of the Bible, of religion, of the church, and of everything for which the church stands. Not only this but we also shall grow broader and richer in our religious experience and in our efficiency as workers in the ranks of the church membership. So important is the matter of growth that we shall give a future lesson to its consideration.

Study and Discussion Topics

1. Do you think that voluntarily joining an organization carries with it the obligation to live up to the standards of that organization? How will this apply to our membership in the church?

2. Just what did Jesus mean when he accused the Pharisees of being like "whited sepulchres"? Read Matt. 23. 23–28 before you answer.

3. How can we make our religion a part of our everyday lives? Give concrete examples.

4. When you have heard fault-finding against the church, has it usually come from loyal workers or from those who were doing little for the success of the church? What do you conclude?

5. What do you think should be the program of church attendance on the part of church members? Have you a fixed program which you follow?

6. Try making a list of all the different church activities in which you are able to take part. Do you do your full share in each?

7. What rule do you think Christians should follow in their giving. Church members average giving less than three cents a day for the work of the church; is this enough?

8. What responsibility do you think young Christians should take about earning the money to pay their share of the church expense?

9. Inquire about the budget of your local church, and learn what system is used for raising the funds. Then decide how much you should pay.

10. Make a summary of the points you think should be remembered from this lesson.

CHAPTER VIII

GROWTH WITHIN THE CHURCH

A LITTLE girl in the catechism class was asked, "Who made you?" Holding her hands about eighteen inches apart she replied, "God made me so long, and I grew the rest."

The little girl expressed a great truth. We do not come into the world with full stature; we must grow physically, mentally, and spiritually. To-day a child, and to-morrow a man or woman taking our part in the world—with just growth and development in between.

THE LAW OF GROWTH

Growth is universal among all living things. The plant which fails to grow quickly withers and wastes away. The mind which ceases to expand soon falls into the rut of old-fogyism and decay. The soul that fails to grow in spiritual knowledge and power loses its responsiveness to God, its satisfaction in religion, and its ability to win others to right ways of living. Jesus recognized the necessity for growth when he said, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4. 28).

New growth in the church.—The point for young Christians especially to understand, then, is that they have not *finished* when they have publicly acknowl-

edged their allegiance to Christ and united with the church; they have only just *begun*. They are like plants transplanted into new and richer soil, and their spiritual vitality will be measured by the growth they make in this new environment.

You have no doubt observed two fields of corn planted side by side from the same seed with only the fence between them, one field tall, vigorous, and thrifty, the other stunted and yellow. Wherein lay the difference? The difference lay in the fact that in the first field all the conditions of growth had been met—fertile, well prepared soil, light, warmth and moisture—while the other field lacked some one or more of the conditions necessary to growth: the soil was not fertile, or else it was not well cultivated, or else moisture was deficient; some law of growth had been broken.

Difference in growth.—It often happens in much the same way in the matter of religious growth. Two persons of about the same age and ability may join the church at the same time. In a few years one of them is a strong Christian and an efficient worker in all the church's enterprises, while the other has not developed much beyond the stage he had reached when he entered. The difference here, as in the other case, lies in obeying or neglecting the laws of growth. Let us note some of the laws of spiritual growth.

Prayer Necessary for Growth

There is no possibility of spiritual growth without

prayer. Prayer is as necessary to the life of the soul as sunshine and air to the plant. Without it the spirit grows cold toward God, and all the spontaneity and satisfaction falls away from our religious experience.

Great men always pray. Washington at Valley Forge, Gladstone carrying great burdens of state, Foch commanding the forces of freedom—these men naturally, and as a matter of course, turn to God in prayer for guidance and strength. Paul, writing to the new members of the church at Thessalonica, urges them to "pray without ceasing." Jesus, when weary and worn from the day's troubles and work, or when confronting some great task demanding more than human wisdom, went away by himself and found comfort and courage in prayer.

When we should pray.—We should pray often. When Paul urges his converts to "pray without ceasing" he does not mean, of course, that they are to be on their knees all the time. His thought is, rather, that they shall at all times and under all circumstances be conscious of God's presence, sympathy, and help, and shall freely open their hearts to this influence.

But this does not mean that we should not have a regular set time for prayer. The prayer *attitude*, or prayer "without ceasing," is like the constant work of our blood system which goes on day and night carrying food to every part of the body. But this process could not continue very long if we did not have regular meals of nutritious food. So with

prayer. We must have the special moments when in the quiet of our hearts we shall talk with our heavenly Father; on this our spiritual growth and strength depend.

How we should pray.—No one can tell another just how to pray, since prayer must be a true expression of what is in the heart if it is to be real prayer. There are, however, several principles which may suggest how each of us may pray.

1. We should not pray *mere words*, "saying our prayers" as a matter of custom or duty. It is possible to repeat the Lord's Prayer, even, automatically, with no meaning or spontaneity in it, making it no prayer at all, but, rather, an insult to God. We should give to our prayers the best thought and fullest meaning of which we are capable.

2. There are several different kinds, or types, of prayer:

(1) The prayer that is simply talking to God about things that interest us, much as we would talk to a near but unseen friend.

(2) Prayer that *petitions*, or asking God for something we need or desire—help to do some task, forgiveness for sin, blessing for our friends or family.

(3) Prayer of fellowship with God and of gratitude worship to him; the desire to merge our will with his, and to feel the full meaning of his sympathy and love in our life.

What ought we to pray about?—It is right that we should pray all of these different kinds of prayers,

yet the prayer of repentance for wrong doing, and the prayer of fellowship and worship are perhaps the highest types. Many persons question whether, in our prayers of petition, we have a right to ask God to do for us what we ought to do for ourselves, or to save us from the effects of misdeeds knowingly committed. For example, a certain high-school girl prayed very earnestly that she might successfully pass an examination on a subject in which she had willfully neglected her study. It is not rare for people deliberately to break the rules of health and then pray (without real repentance) that they may escape sickness. We must do our part before we ask God to do his.

Growth Through Study of the Bible and Religion

If one wants to become a chemist, he studies the text books on chemistry, but he does more than this. He goes into the chemical laboratory and works out the laws and theories through actual experiments. In order to be a worthy Christian one needs to follow the same plan. First he must study the Bible, the textbook of religion, and then he must put its teachings into practice in the laboratory of Christian living. Only in this way will his religious knowledge be helpful and his religion real.

The greatest book.—There are many reasons why one should know his Bible. As Sir Walter Scott lay in his last illness, he called for a book. Upon being

asked what book, he replied, "There is but one book—give me the Bible." By common consent the Bible is the world's greatest book. It has had a wider circulation and a wider influence than any other book of any time. The Scriptures are to-day available in whole or in part in more than five hundred different languages and dialects.

But we should study our Bible not only because of this position of preeminence, but because of its great religious value. It acquaints us with God as our Friend and Father, showing us his love and his plan for our life. It reveals Jesus as our Saviour and example, showing us the way to live. It portrays human nature. In it we see how true happiness comes to those who are obedient to God, and how unhappiness comes to those who turn away from him. The Bible shows us how God's presence and power may be felt in our own lives, helping us to live and grow daily in accordance with his will. It thus becomes a source of wisdom, guidance, and inspiration. To be ignorant of its teachings is to miss the best foundation that has been laid for satisfactory living.

How we got our Bible.—In our study of the Bible we need to remember that it is not one book, but sixty-six books, written by different authors at different times. Hundreds of years elapsed between the writing of the earliest books and the writing of the latest books. Each author wrote for some distinct religious purpose, but not one of them knew that his writings would be gathered with others into a sacred

book and used centuries afterward as a Bible by millions of people.

But in the days of the early church, long before there was a Bible, various religious writings were used in the services of worship. As years went by they were gradually brought together, and finally came to be spoken of as one book. Thus our Bible has been a growth. The significant feature about these writings which gave them a place in the Bible was the fact that each one in its own way revealed God or some phase of religious truth, the culmination being found in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is why the Bible holds such a high place in the world's thought. It is God's revelation to mankind.

How to study the Bible.—As to a method of study, no single one can be prescribed. Different people will follow different plans. Much will depend upon our age, understanding, and the purpose we have in mind. Some people read the Bible through from Genesis to Revelation. But this is not the most helpful method, especially for young people. Some parts of the Bible are not very interesting to children, although they may be helpful when we are older.

Careful students may with great profit study each book separately, trying to understand its exact message in the light of the time, circumstances, and purpose of its writing. Another interesting method is to study the great characters of the Bible. As we study the lives of such men as Abraham, Joseph,

Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Jesus, John, and Paul we find them full of inspiration.

But whatever method we may follow in study, we must not neglect the Bible as a *book of devotion*. Take a few moments each day for quiet reading, meditation and prayer. Perhaps the daily readings assigned in the church school lessons will serve as a guide. As we *read attentively* God will speak to us from his holy book.

Other religious reading.—The growing Christian will keep informed on the religious enterprises of the day and on the great questions confronting the church. This means that he must be a reader of the books, journals, and papers which deal with such problems. Hundreds of good, interesting books and many periodicals are now available on religious themes for every earnest reader.

We Grow by Serving

To grow strong we need to exercise. The athlete is muscular and vigorous, not only because he eats properly, but because he trains his body. This law of activity is written in every part of our being. To grow as Christians we need to serve. The church member who shirks responsibility and lives only for himself will suffer spiritual paralysis. Like the man who hid his talent in the napkin, he will lose even that which he had before (see Matt. 24. 24–29).

Learning by doing.—A story is told of a young Korean Christian. He had been studying the Sermon

on the Mount, but was having difficulty in understanding it. The missionary teacher then explained a small portion of it each day and told the Korean to go out and put it into practice. Coming back with a smile of intelligence he said, "Now I understand." The principle is always true. It is through *living* the truth that we really learn and grow in understanding.

Nothing was emphasized more constantly by Jesus than the need of helpful service. It was the law of life in his kingdom. One day some of the disciples were discussing among themselves the question of rank, and Jesus revealed to them the secret of true greatness. He said, "Whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all." Not what a man gets for himself, but what he does for others is the measure of his greatness. We never erect statues for men who live just for themselves. We give a high place in our mind to such men as Jacob Riis, Booker T. Washington, William Carey, David Livingstone, and Abraham Lincoln. They dedicated their lives in self-forgetful service for the welfare of their fellow men.

Growing Like our Model

Christ was a great teacher—but he was more than that. He was our great example. Luke pictures his ideal growth and development as a lad twelve years of age when he says that he "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2. 52).

Jesus followed the rules that we must follow.— He was our model in prayer. He felt it a constant need. Often he withdrew from the crowd into the mountains or into the desert that he might be alone for prayer. He was a student of the Old Testament Scriptures as they existed in his day. He was constantly referring to them in all his teaching (Matt. 22. 29, Luke 24. 27; 24. 32). Knowing their value for spiritual life and growth, he said to his disciples, "Search the scriptures."

Jesus was our model in service, he "went about doing good." He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Toward the close of his ministry he said to those who knew him best, "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth." He showed them by his life what it meant to be brotherly, and to desire the best for every man, no matter what he might deserve. His whole simple gospel could be summed up in loving helpfulness for others.

Shall we not, then, make him our supreme example, striving that we may attain a full, rich growth as his followers?

Study and Discussion Topics

1. By referring to the body and the mind show our need of growth. Can you show that the same truth holds for our spiritual nature?
2. What are the conditions necessary to physical growth? To mental growth? To spiritual growth?
3. Why do you think Christians should pray?

4. How often and when should we pray?

5. How should we pray, and for what?

6. Compared with your school texts, how well do you know your Bible? What is your plan or method of studying the Bible? Why should one read the Bible daily? Will you do this?

7. What religious reading should one do besides his study of the Bible? With the help of your pastor, Sunday school teacher or parents make a list of several religious books suitable for your reading. Will you plan to read, say, four such books within the next year?

8. Read the story Jesus told about the man who hid his talent in a napkin. Why was he condemned? How does that apply to us?

9. You have known some beautiful characters, perhaps of older persons, whom you greatly admire for their Christlike spirit. Do you suppose they were always that way, or did they *grow* by making Christ their model?

10. From this chapter make a summary of the best lessons you have gleaned and will hope to remember and use.

MAP OF T

Shaded portions show regions where Method

WORLD

is at work spreading the gospel of Christ

CHAPTER IX

OUR OWN CHURCH

You have joined the Methodist Church. It is now *your* church, to be your place of worship, and the center in which you will serve.

Do you realize how large and extensive is this church which you are joining? The Methodist Episcopal Church has more than 4,200,000 members, while the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, numbers more than 2,100,000. The joint membership of these two great branches of Methodism is almost equal to the combined population of Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Saint Louis, Minneapolis, and Baltimore. Imagine the numbers marching at the rate of three miles an hour, eight hours a day! You would have to stand for about one hundred days waiting for the last of the great procession to pass in review! Think of the possibilities for world conquest in the name of Christ which such an army represents! Is it not glorious to be a part of it!

In order to have some idea of the world-wide extent of Methodism's battle lines, let us look at the shaded map. Our chief center of strength lies, of course, in the United States, where a large proportion of our members reside. But you will notice also that our responsibilities extend to every continent. We have

nearly 500,000 members in the foreign field, the most of them being in eastern and southern Asia. And we have splendid, growing work in many countries of Europe, and in Africa and South America.

To carry on these vast enterprises calls for large equipment. The two main branches of Methodists have nearly 48,000 church buildings and 21,000 parsonages, enough to house a city of one hundred thousand persons. The church owns property valued at more than $350,000,000. The annual expenditures have been nearly $40,000,000, but the amount handled is being greatly increased through the gifts of the Centenary Fund and other recent income.

The wealth and importance of a church, however, like the wealth and importance of a nation, does not consist in the value of its material belongings, but in the character and worth of its men and women and boys and girls. The Methodist church is very rich in this human and spiritual worth, to which each of us should add something through our membership in it.

Origin of the Methodist Episcopal Church

But let us take a look into the past, that we may understand the beginnings out of which our great church arose. This takes us first to England, where Methodism began.

It was in the early part of the eighteenth century, two hundred years ago. The moral conditions in

England were very low. Profanity, drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, and vicious sports were rather common. Vice was unchecked and public life was full of corruption.

John Wesley—his early life.—It was into this kind of a situation that John Wesley was born at Epworth, England, in 1703. There was one general church in England at that time called the Church of England. It was different from our churches in that it was supported by the government. Wesley's father was a clergyman in the Church of England. His mother was noted for her Christian character and her devotion to her children.

When John Wesley was six years old the parsonage at Epworth, where the family was living, caught fire. The house was soon enveloped in flames. All but John had escaped. With the aid of some of the neighbors he was rescued through an upstairs window just as the roof fell in. "Come, neighbors," cried the father, when his child was brought to him, "let us kneel down! Let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go. I am rich enough." The fire and the prayer naturally made a deep impression upon the imagination of the young child. He afterward referred to himself as a "brand plucked from the burning."

Wesley at Oxford.—A number of years afterward, while in school at Oxford, John and Charles Wesley together with some other students formed the habit of uniting in one of their rooms for study and prayer.

They became so earnest and regular in their habits that the other students mockingly called them the "Holy Club," and "Methodists." This term of scorn before long came to be highly honored as the name of our great church.

Becoming a missionary.—Upon leaving Oxford Wesley felt that he ought to become a missionary, and in 1735 sailed for America to do work among the Indians in Georgia. But his work was not successful, and he returned to England in 1738 very much discouraged. There was one thing which happened on this journey that profoundly affected all the remainder of Wesley's life. On board the ship were some Moravian missionaries and their families. During a severe storm, when most of the passengers were crying out with fear and excitement, Wesley noted the Moravians seemed very calm and unafraid. He made their acquaintance and learned from them a very important lesson. This lesson was so important that it gave a new vision to Wesley and a new power to his ministry. It was this: that *religion is not only something to study and learn about*, but even more important, *it is a vital part of one's everyday life, a very real experience to be felt and known.*

To be able to speak of religion with a certainty and conviction which grew out of personal experience—this was something new to Wesley. On his return to London he sought out the Moravians and at a meeting in Aldersgate Street on the 24th of May, 1739, he received the experience for himself.

The great English revival.—The new religious experience set Wesley aflame with a new passion. Together with Charles, his brother, who later became a great hymn writer, and with George Whitefield, a noted preacher, they started an evangelistic campaign which continued for half a century. Their purpose was not to found a new church, but to revive religion in the Church of England, and improve the moral conditions of society.

On account of their methods and the plainness and zeal of their message the reformers were barred from the churches. They then took to preaching on the streets and in the fields, often speaking to more than ten thousand at one time. People were converted everywhere, and large numbers flocked to the standards of the new movement.

As was to be expected under such conditions, persecutions sprang up. The Wesleys were often greeted with mobs and pelted with stones and mud. But, just as it was in the days of the early church, so it was now. The more they were persecuted, the more the work increased.

As time went on, the movement grew and came to be treated with more tolerance, and the Methodists were looked on with respect for their earnestness and devoutness. Wesley was recognized as a great leader, and his cause as a worthy cause. His own journals record that during his later days he was received everywhere with the greatest respect, "the populace turning out and standing agape as though the king himself passed by."

The first Methodist Society.—Although there was no intention on the part of Wesley to organize a new church, it soon became a necessity. As the converts multiplied they had to be gathered into a church and cared for. The Church of England held itself aloof from the movement, and would not receive the new members. In fact, it is doubtful whether the new Methodists would have fitted into the church of that day. So Wesley organized them into classes and societies for instruction. The first class of converts was organized at Bristol, England, in 1739, and in the same year the "Old Foundry" at London was dedicated as the first "Methodist Chapel."

From this humble beginning the Methodist Episcopal Church has come. Wesley labored for nearly fifty years, traveling on horseback through England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, preaching an average of five hundred sermons a year. At his death in 1791, the new church numbered 120,000. So rapid was the growth, and so marked the influence of the movement that again and again Wesley was led to exclaim, "Behold, what hath God wrought!"

Methodism in America.—The beginning of Methodism in America was connected with a curious incident. Among the converts of Wesley on one of his trips into Ireland was a man named Philip Embury. Embury came to America in 1760. The following year another group of Irish immigrants arrived, among them Barbara Heck, a peasant woman of courageous character and a loyal Methodist. Coming upon Philip

Embury, she found that he had allowed his religious life to grow cold. Rebuking him, she demanded that he immediately start a preaching service. "But I cannot preach," stammered Embury, "for I have neither chapel or congregation." "Preach in your own house," replied Barbara Heck, "and to our own company." Philip Embury preached his sermon; thus American Methodism began in a private house in New York, in 1766, the first congregation numbering five persons. The first Methodist chapel was built in 1768, Philip Embury preaching the first sermon. It still stands on John Street, New York, and was known as "Wesley Chapel," now "Old John Street Church."

As the work grew, the need of leadership and assistance became apparent. A letter was written to Wesley asking that a leader be sent to develop Methodism in America. In response to this appeal two men, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor, volunteered to go. The members of the British Conference of 1769 took up a collection to provide for their passage. In addition, a gift of £50 was sent as a token of brotherly love from British to American Methodism. Thus these two men started out with £50 to Christianize a continent!

Our first Bishop.—Two years later, 1771, British Methodism sent to America its greatest contribution, Francis Asbury, who at once became the inspiration and leader of the church in the new country. He traveled annually on horseback from New England

to Ohio, preaching and directing the work. His salary was $64 a year!

The *official* birthday of our church in America was December 25, 1784, when the first Methodist Conference, historically known as The Christmas Conference, was held at Baltimore. Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury were elected and consecrated bishops; other ministers were ordained, and our first Methodist Discipline was formulated and adopted.

Methodism, North and South.—The work of the new church spread rapidly. By the year 1800 the membership was 65,000. Methodism in America continued as one church until 1844, when the slavery question became so intense that a division was effected and the Methodist Church, South, was formed. But this unfortunate cause of division is now a thing of the past. Old differences are being forgotten, and the spirit of unity is coming to prevail. Indications are that an early reunion of American Methodism will be brought about; then our great church will move forward with a membership of more than six millions. What an imperishable monument is this to the consecrated genius of our human founder, John Wesley, and what a responsibility this enormous body of Christians bear to the world!

Study and Discussion Topics

1. Give facts to show the magnitude of the Methodist Church in numbers.

2. Give facts to show its importance geographically and in expenditures.

3. Tell the story of John Wesley, the founder of our church.

4. Give an account of the first Methodist Society.

5. Tell how the Methodist Church had its start in the United States.

6. Tell of Philip Embury; of Francis Asbury.

7. When and where did Methodism have its official beginning in this country?

8. Tell of the help given by British Methodism to American Methodism.

9. Explain about Methodism, North and South.

10. Give a summary of the important points of the chapter.

CHAPTER X

ORGANIZATION AND ENTERPRISES OF OUR CHURCH

In the European war, the United States mobilized more than 4,000,000 men. To look after the supplies, training and military movements of such an army called for a vast system of organization. There were companies, battalions, regiments, and divisions, requiring thousands of officers of various ranks such as lieutenants, captains, colonels, majors, and generals.

In a similar way Methodism has had to be highly organized. There is a complete system of Conferences, the principal divisions of which are the Quarterly Conference, the Annual Conference, and the General Conference. To supervise the work there are many officials and leaders, the chief of whom are the ministers, district superintendents, and bishops.

Our System of Conferences and Supervision

Suppose we visit, in imagination, a meeting of the governing body of our local church, that we may learn what we can about the Methodist system. This local organization is called *a Quarterly Conference* because it meets four times a year to hear reports and transact the business of the church. As we enter

the room we see many people we know. There are our pastor, our Sunday school superintendent, the presidents of the Epworth League, the Men's Brotherhood, the Woman's Foreign and Woman's Home Missionary Societies, besides several others who are called trustees and stewards. We learn that the trustees look after the church property, while the stewards supervise the finances of the church.

The Quarterly Conference.—Sitting at the table as the presiding officer is a man we have perhaps met before, the district superintendent. He has twenty-five or thirty churches on the district under his supervision, so we only get to see him three or four times a year. We are told that there are several other districts in our Annual Conference jurisdiction; and that at the session of the Annual Conference the district superintendents meet with the bishop as a Cabinet, to advise with him about the appointments of the ministers.

But let us return to our Quarterly Conference. After opening the meeting with a prayer, the district superintendent calls on the pastor and the leading officers to give reports of the work under their charge. Then there are several questions that follow in the order of business, the purpose of which is to put on record the progress of the church, and also, to find out if any department needs special attention.

After going through this routine matter, the district superintendent calls for miscellaneous business. One of the stewards arises and says: "The *Annual Con-*

ference meets in a few weeks. It will have much important business to transact. But none more important than the appointment of the ministers. I am sure I voice the feeling of all the official members of this Quarterly Conference when I say that we hope our pastor will be returned. Therefore, that the presiding bishop of the Annual Conference, in making the appointments, may know our wishes, I move that we officially request the return of our pastor for another year." A vote is then taken on this motion.

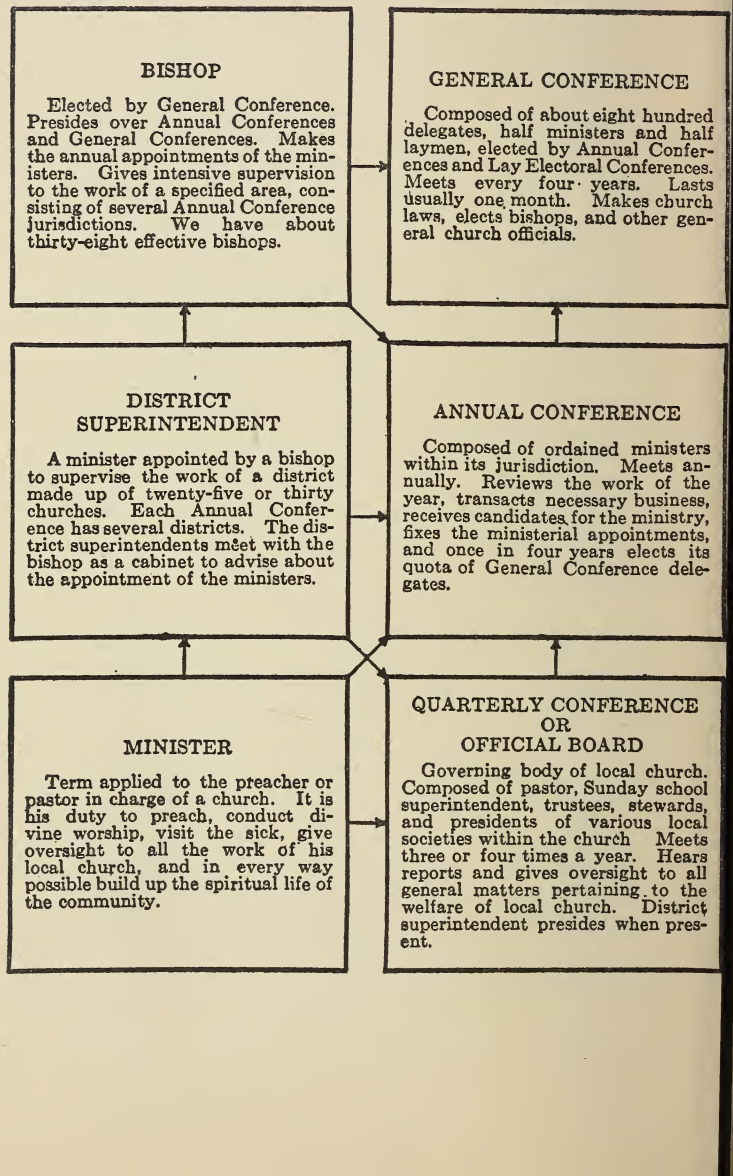
Other Conferences.—Then the district superintendent says, "As you know, the *General Conference* meets this year during the month of May. It is the lawmaking body of our church, having final authority in all legislative matters. It also elects the bishops and other general officers of the church. The eight hundred or more delegates, as you know, are elected by the Annual Conferences. So your Annual Conference will elect its quota of delegates at its coming session. But since half of the delegates are laymen, it is required by the Discipline that a *Lay Electoral Conference* shall convene every four years at the same time and place as the ministers' Annual Conference, for the purpose of electing lay delegates to the General Conference. This Lay Electoral Conference is composed of laymen, one from each church, of the Annual Conference. So you are now asked to choose one of your laymen to serve in this capacity." Nominations are then made, and the election is completed, after which the meeting adjourns.

From this imaginary visit to a Quarterly Conference, we get a little glimpse of the closely connected system of the Methodist Church. First, there is the Quarterly Conference, or, in its stead, the "official board." Next is the Annual Conference made up of the ordained ministers within its area. It meets once a year to review the work, transact necessary business, receive new candidates for the ministry, and fix the ministers' appointments for the following year. And, finally, there is the General Conference, the highest authoritative body of our church. This complete system of organization, carefully supervised by our bishops, district superintendents, and ministers, has been one of the secrets of the rapid permanent growth of our church in its world-wide enterprises. The scheme appearing on the following page represents this system of organization.

Our Benevolent Enterprises

John Wesley said, "The world is my parish." This ideal has ruled our church in all of its history. The consciousness that we are working together, not simply to build up our local church, but to serve millions of people in every land has urged us on to vast achievements.

When the battle was going against them a Scottish bugler was ordered by his commander to play a "retreat." He replied, "I cannot play a retreat, but I can sound a charge!" Methodism, like the Scottish bugler, has not learned to retreat. Its command is


BISHOP
Elected by General Conference. Presides over Annual Conferences and General Conferences. Makes the annual appointments of the ministers. Gives intensive supervision to the work of a specified area, consisting of several Annual Conference jurisdictions. We have about thirty-eight effective bishops.
GENERAL CONFERENCE
Composed of about eight hundred delegates, half ministers and half laymen, elected by Annual Conferences and Lay Electoral Conferences. Meets every four years. Lasts usually one month. Makes church laws, elects bishops, and other general church officials.
DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT
A minister appointed by a bishop to supervise the work of a district made up of twenty-five or thirty churches. Each Annual Conference has several districts. The district superintendents meet with the bishop as a cabinet to advise about the appointment of the ministers.
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Composed of ordained ministers within its jurisdiction. Meets annually. Reviews the work of the year, transacts necessary business, receives candidates for the ministry, fixes the ministerial appointments, and once in four years elects its quota of General Conference delegates.
MINISTER
Term applied to the preacher or pastor in charge of a church. It is his duty to preach, conduct divine worship, visit the sick, give oversight to all the work of his local church, and in every way possible build up the spiritual life of the community.
QUARTERLY CONFERENCE OR OFFICIAL BOARD
Governing body of local church. Composed of pastor, Sunday school superintendent, trustees, stewards, and presidents of various local societies within the church Meets three or four times a year. Hears reports and gives oversight to all general matters pertaining to the welfare of local church. District superintendent presides when present.

always "Forward!" This is the spirit which has prompted our great benevolent enterprises.

Board of Foreign Missions.—It was in 1806 that the foreign missionary spirit had its birth in America. Five students sat beneath a haystack in Williamstown, Massachusetts, discussing the possibility of obeying the Master's command to take the gospel to every creature. They thought of the millions in India, China, Africa, and other lands who are bound by the chains of idolatry and superstition. They wished and prayed that somehow they might be permitted to take the light to those who sit in the darkness of heathenism. Finally, one of this number cried out, "We can if we will," and the others repeated the cry.

A few years later four of these young men volunteered their services to go to the ends of the earth as missionaries. They presented themselves to the authorities of the Congregational Church, as a result of which an organization was effected in 1810 to raise the funds and supervise their work. It was called the American Board of Foreign Missions. This was the first missionary society in America. In 1819, our own Methodist Missionary Society was organized in order to meet our share of the world-wide need.

Turning to the map, it is seen how widely our missionary front has extended. Methodist missionaries are to-day scattered in thirty-four different countries, working in a hundred different languages and dialects.

Board of Home Missions.—But the need for

missionary work is not limited to the foreign field. It is needed in this country also. There are the Indians on the frontier, and the throngs of immigrants coming to our shores every year. The Board of Home Missions grew up to minister to these people, to give them the gospel, and help to make them good Christians and good Americans.

Board of Education.—One of the first things done by our Pilgrim forefathers was to establish Christian schools for the instruction of their children. Our church has always felt this a duty. Our Board of Education was organized to give special attention to this task. To-day we have 108 Methodist schools, colleges, and seminaries. To help needy students in these schools an Educational Loan Fund has been established which aids about 2,000 worthy young people every year.

Board of Sunday Schools.—John Wesley made it a special rule that his preachers should not neglect to provide religious instruction for the children. The Sunday school has developed to meet this need. But in more recent years this work has taken on special significance. To make possible a larger advance in Sunday school work, our Board of Sunday Schools was created by the General Conference of 1908. Since that time the Sunday school advance has been phenomenal, the membership growing from 3,000,000 in 1908 to 4,500,000 in 1920.

The other principal benevolent boards of our church are the *Board of Education for Negroes*, which

looks after the education of colored people in the South; the *Board of Conference Claimants*, which provides a support for our retired ministers, their widows and orphans; and the two great women's societies, the *Woman's Foreign*, and the *Woman's Home Missionary Societies*.

The Centenary.—The year 1919 was the one hundredth anniversary of the beginning of Missions in Methodism. In commemoration thereof, it was decided to put on a campaign greatly to enlarge the missionary vision and giving of our people. The result was marvelous. More than $113,000,000 was raised for the world-wide task.

Dr. Charles E. Jefferson, a leading minister in another denomination, said: "The successful financial drive of the Methodists of the United States for work at home and abroad is the most stupendous achievement of any branch of the Christian Church in modern history. It is in every way wonderful. It dazzles the imagination and thrills the heart. It aimed, not simply at dollars, but at the building up of the life of the soul. It was a vast program of spiritual culture."

That this tribute is merited is seen further by the fact that the campaign includes the united effort to win a million new converts to Christ and the church, and also to enlist fifty-three thousand new recruits for life service in the work of the Kingdom.

It taxes our imagination fully to realize the significance of this great task. It is vastly increasing the resources, equipment, and missionaries of our boards,

making possible long needed reenforcements on the field. It is also bringing a deepened spiritual life to the whole church, as our people have caught the vision of larger service. As one has said: "It runs far into the future. It is as wide as the world, and it goes down deep into the soul."

What a privilege it is to live in this new day and have a part in the unparalleled opportunities for extending the kingdom of God to the ends of the earth! What a privilege to be a soldier in the great onward marching army of the Christian Church!

The Challenge to World Conquest

As a member of the Methodist Church, you have enlisted in the conquest for world righteousness. Think of the progress already achieved. Starting with Christ and a handful of fishermen, the new kingdom began its growth. At the end of the second century there were two million Christians, at the end of the eighteenth century, two hundred millions, and at the end of the nineteenth century, five hundred millions.

But think of the task yet uncompleted. In China and India, with their hordes of population, ninety-five per cent of whom cannot read or write; in Africa, "apart from mission stations, the people do not even know that writing has ever been invented!" Almost a billion people in this world—ten times the population of the United States—have never heard of Jesus

Christ. The vice and degradation under such conditions is almost beyond belief. How can the world be safe until these strongholds of sin and heathenism have been broken down? How can the church rest until it has brought the Light into this darkness?

So this is our challenge. It calls for unlimited consecration of life, money, and prayer from those who belong to the army of the Christian Church. But we shall not fail. Even as we gave of money and life to make democracy safe for the world, so with unstinted sacrifice and devotion we shall respond to make the world safe for democracy by carrying Christ's message to every corner of our own land and to the ends of the earth.

Study and Discussion Topics

1. Show by a comparison why the Methodist Church requires a large and carefully planned organization.

2. What is a *Quarterly Conference*, and where and how often is it held? What are its duties.

3. What is an *Annual Conference*, and what are its duties?

4. What is a *General Conference*? How often is it held? Who make up its membership? What are its duties?

5. Name the principal officials of the church, beginning with bishops.

6. Tell of the Board of Foreign Missions and its work. Of Home Missions.

7. What are some of the other boards of the church and their functions?

8. Give an account of the Centenary, its purpose and program.

9. Tell of the great present-day challenge to the church.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

Some Things Methodists Should Commit to Memory

There are many things which it would be well for us to know by heart. For example, we ought to store our minds with beautiful passages of Scripture, such as the first psalm, the twenty-third psalm, the twenty-fourth psalm, the Beatitudes (Matt. 5. 1–12), First Corinthians, thirteenth chapter, and many others. These will deepen our religious knowledge and strengthen our faith. For the same reason we ought also to commit several of the choice hymns of the church. In addition, four other things are here suggested which every new member should at once learn: The Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the General Confession, and the Lord's Prayer.

The Apostles' Creed

A creed is a clear, brief statement setting forth the fundamental beliefs of a church. Many centuries ago, creedal statements became necessary in order to defend the church against false teachings. The members needed to know clearly just what the church believed. Otherwise they were in danger of

becoming confused in their thought and being led astray by false doctrines.

The Apostles' Creed grew out of such conditions. It is the oldest creed now in use, some of its clauses probably going back as far as the days of the apostles. That is why it is called Apostles' Creed. It is quite generally accepted to-day by both Protestants and Catholics.

It is the custom in our Methodist churches to use the Apostles' Creed every Sunday morning, the congregation reciting it together as a part of their worship. It, therefore, is very desirable that we should be able to give it from memory so that we can participate easily and reverently in the service.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

As you study this creed think about it carefully, so you will be able to understand it when you recite it. The "Holy Ghost" means God's Holy Spirit or the Helper who Jesus promised would be sent after he went away, to live in our hearts and to comfort, guide and help all true disciples. The phrase "holy catholic Church" does not mean Roman or Greek Catholic Church. The word "catholic" means "general" or "universal." It therefore refers to *the* church, consisting of all true Christians everywhere.

The Ten Commandments

According to the Bible story (Exod. 19. 16 to 20. 26) the Ten Commandments were prepared by Moses under divine inspiration and authority. They not only furnished a moral code for the children of Israel, but they have been the basis of all moral laws down to the present time.

I. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

II. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them; for I Jehovah thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing loving-kindness unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy

God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is a Sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

V. Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.

VI. Thou shalt not kill.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shall not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

The following abbreviated form of the Ten Commandments is used in the prayer book for Boy Scouts. Some may prefer to use this form. (See Boy Scout Book, pages 106–107.)

1. I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before me.

2. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
3. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Honor thy father and thy mother.
5. Thou shalt not kill.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

The General Confession

This is a part of the ritual ceremony which is used during the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The congregation is expected to recite the "Confession" together. Therefore we should all know it so we can participate heartily:

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men, we acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time must grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty, provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto us. Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; for thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may ever hereafter serve

and please thee in newness of life, to the honor and glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen.

Some Things Methodists Should Know About

The *Discipline* is the book which contains the constitution, laws, regulations, ritual, etc. of the Methodist Church. As time goes on we ought to become informed as to its contents so that we may be intelligent and efficient as Methodists. It is the guide book to most things pertaining to our church. The General Conference is the only body which has power to make any changes in it.

The General Rules of Our Church

(Abbreviated. Printed in full in the Discipline, ¶¶ 26-33.)

The General Rules

Forbid: (*a*) **Doing harm or evil of any kind.—**

Profanity (swearing); unnecessary work and buying or selling on Sunday; using, buying, or selling intoxicating liquors as a beverage; fighting, quarreling, brawling, brother going to law with brother; returning evil for evil; smuggling; taking usury or unlawful interest; uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, particularly speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers; doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.

(*b*) **Doing what we know is not for the glory of God,** as: Extravagance in dress; the taking such diversions as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus; singing smutty songs and reading questionable and harmful books; needless self-indulgence; laying up treasure upon the earth; contracting debts without a probability of being able to pay them.

The General Rules

Require us to be merciful and to do good of every possible sort, and as far as possible to all men;

To their bodies, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick or in prison.

To their souls, by instructing, reproving, or encouraging all with whom we come in contact.

By doing good, especially to Christians, employing them preferably to others; buying one of another; helping each other in business.

By being diligent and frugal.

By running with patience the race which is set before us, denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily.

The General Rules

Enjoin attendance upon all the ordinances of God.—Such are:

The Public Worship of God.

The Lord's Supper.

Family and private prayer.

Bible study.

The Twenty-five Articles of Religion

The Twenty-five Articles of Religion were written a long time ago. At the time of the Reformation in England in the sixteenth century, the Church of England prepared thirty-nine statements or articles which represented their belief at that time. When Methodism started in America, John Wesley felt that a creed was necessary. So he prepared the twenty-five articles which are simply an abbreviated adaptation of the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England.

It has been thought best to preserve them in their original form, because of the historic associations. Consequently, as you read them in the Discipline, the language sounds very strange. However, they contain much essential truth. A short statement of their central teachings is herewith given.

THE CENTRAL TEACHINGS OF THE ARTICLES OF RELIGION

(The Articles are printed in ful in the Discipline, ¶¶ 1-25.)

1. There is but one God, but he has revealed himself as a Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

2. Jesus is the God-man. He was truly man and also truly God.

3. Jesus arose with his body from the grave and lives forever.

4. The Holy Spirit is a divine Person.

5. The Bible contains all we need to know to be saved and is our only sacred rule of faith and life.*

6. The Old Testament is sacred as well as the New Testament. The Old Testament ceremonies and customs were for the Jewish people, but its general precepts are for all.

7. All men inherit from their ancestors evil as well as good traits and desires. These inherited evil impulses incline us to do wrong and are therefore called "birth sins," or "original sin."

8. Each of us has a free will and can choose right or wrong, but we are unable without the help of God to live a good and holy life.

9. We are saved by faith, and faith alone. No one can be saved by his good works.*

*A star (*) indicates that the article is not accepted by the Roman Catholic Church.

10. Good works that are done in the right spirit are pleasing to God. They are the necessary fruits of a Christian life.

11. No one can do more good than he ought to do, so there can be no works of "supererogation" to be credited to other people.*

12. A Christian who falls into sin can receive God's forgiveness if he truly repents.

13. The visible Church of Christ is composed of believing people banded together to provide for the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.*

14. The Roman Catholic view of purgatory, the pardon of sins, and the worship of images, relics, and saints is contrary to the Word of God.*

15. In the public worship and the sacraments only a language the people can understand should be used.*

16. There are only two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.*

17. Baptism is a symbol of the new birth, or the beginning of the Christian life.

18. The Lord's Supper is a symbol of Christ's suffering and death for us. The bread and wine are not changed into Christ's body.*

19. The people have a right to both the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper.*

20. The "mass" is unscriptural and utterly wrong.*

21. Ministers have a right to get married.*

22. Every church, or denomination, has the right to adopt and use a ritual of its own.*

23. The government of the United States is and ought to be free and independent.

24. Christians have a right to own private property, if they use it in a Christian way.

25. It is right for the sake of justice and truth to take an oath before a proper official.

Ten Doctrines Which Methodists Believe and Teach

BY BISHOP VINCENT

I. I believe that all men are sinners.

II. I believe that God the Father loves all men and hates sin.

III. I believe that Jesus Christ died for all men to make possible their salvation from sin, and to make sure the salvation of all who believe in him.

IV. I believe that the Holy Spirit is given to all men to enlighten and to incline them to repent of their sins and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

V. I believe that all who repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ receive the forgiveness of sin. (This is justification.)

VI. I believe that all who receive the forgiveness of sin are at the same time made new creatures in Christ Jesus. (This is regeneration.)

VII. I believe that all who are made new creatures in Christ Jesus are accepted as the children of God. (This is adoption.)

VIII. I believe that all who are accepted as the children of God may receive the inward assurance of the Holy Spirit to that fact. (This is the witness of the Spirit.)

IX. I believe that all who truly desire and seek it may love God with all their heart and soul, mind and strength, and their neighbors as themselves. (This is entire sanctification.)

X. I believe that all who persevere to the end, and only those, shall be saved in heaven forever. (This is the true final perseverance.)

THE CONVERT'S COVENANT[1]

I, here and now, reject the sinful and worldly life and solemnly promise by the help of God to resist sin in every form.

I believe in God our Father, who is in heaven, "who loves us and gives us all good things."

I believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, "who gave his life for us, forgives us our sins, and teaches us" to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves.

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us in our trials, delivers us from evil, leads us into all truth and works in us to do the will of God."

I believe in the Church, in the life after death, and in the kingdom of God on earth and in heaven.

[1] This contains the substance of the pledge made by the young Christian at the time of baptism and reception into full membership.

I accept baptism as a sacred pledge, that I will obediently keep God's holy will and commandments and walk in them all the days of my life. Amen.

A Membership Ceremony[1]

Form for Receiving Children as Members of the Church

We regard all children who have been baptized as standing in covenant relation to God, and as preparatory members under the special care and supervision of the Church. Whenever baptized children shall understand the obligation of religion, and shall give evidence of piety, they may be admitted into full membership in the Church.

At the appointed time, the Minister shall read the names of the children to be received; and, after they have come forward, he shall say to the Congregation:

Dearly Beloved, these persons here present before you are baptized children of the Church, who, having arrived at the years of discretion, desire now to confirm the vows of their baptism and to enter upon the active duties and the full privileges of membership in the Church of Christ. They have been duly instructed as to the truths of the Christian faith, and have been examined as to their fitness for such membership. Before they assume the required vows let us invoke on their behalf the gracious blessing of God our Father, and the continued presence of the Holy Spirit who hath inclined their hearts to this end.

[1]From the Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Copyright, 1920, by The Methodist Book Concern.

Then shall the Minister say:

Let us pray.

Almighty and everliving God, who has appointed unto children a place in thy kingdom, and through thy well beloved Son didst give unto them thy blessing, we beseech thee that thou wilt visit with thy favor the homes of this congregation, and fill the hearts of all parents with the fear of God and the spirit of wisdom and love. We pray that thy church may be faithful in the nurture of those committed to her care. Let thy blessing rest upon these, thy children, whom thou hast graciously inclined to thy service and to the fellowship of thy people. We beseech thee, that thou wilt so further them by thy grace and direct them by thy Spirit, that they may be faithful servants in thy kingdom on earth, and finally reign with thee in thy kingdom above, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Then shall the Minister say:

Hear the words of the Gospel as written by St. Luke (Chap. 2. 40–52).

And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. And his parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast; and when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not; but supposing him to be in the

company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance: and when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him. And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions: and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? know ye not that I must be in my Father's house? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all *these* sayings in her heart.

Then shall the Minister address the Persons seeking Admission as follows:

Dearly Beloved, we rejoice in the grace of God in that he has brought you to this place, and by his Spirit has confirmed you in your purpose to serve him and to live in the fellowship of the Church of Christ. It is needful now that you should declare your faith and purpose in the presence of this congregation by answering the following questions:

Do you receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and do you confess him as your Lord and Master?

Answer. I do.

Do you receive and profess the Christian Faith as contained in the New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Answer. I do.

Will you be loyal to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and uphold it by your prayer, your presence, your gifts, and your service?

Answer. I will.

Then, the Candidate kneeling, the Minister shall say:

Defend, O Lord, *these* thy *children* with thy heavenly grace, that *they* may continue thine forever, and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until *they* come unto thy everlasting kingdom. *Amen.*

Then the Minister, extending the right hand of fellowship, shall say to the Candidates:

We welcome you to the communion of the Church of God; and, in testimony of our Christian affection and the cordiality with which we receive you, I hereby extend to you the right hand of fellowship: and may God grant that you may be a faithful and useful Member of the Church militant till you are called to the fellowship of the Church triumphant, which is "without fault before the throne of God."

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